



THE EXCELLENT EXEMPLAR — MUHAMMAD

THE MESSENGER OF ALLAH

Muhammad Zafrulla Khan

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Forward

This little volume sets forth in a brief compass a simple account in narrative form of the principal events in the life of Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, the Prophet of Islam, followed by an appreciation of his extraordinarily rich and gracious personality. The book's chief merit lies in the fact that each incident is authenticated with reference to acknowledged historical sources. It thus fills a long felt need of making a brief, authentic, biography of a great historic personality available to the average Western reader at small cost in time and money.

Except where otherwise indicated, all references are to the Quran. In rendering the Arabic text of the Quran into English the author has kept closest to the English translation by Maulawi Sher Ali published by the Oriental and Religious Publishing Corporation Ltd., Rabwah, West Pakistan, under the title *The Holy Quran*, and has adopted the method of numbering the verses followed in that translation.

The events of the Prophets' life and his exposition of Islamic values and principles are based upon authentic and well-recognized original sources. As, however, English translations of these are not easily available to the average Western reader, it has not been considered necessary to add references which could serve no useful purpose. Orientalists and scholars of Islam will have no difficulty in locating the references in the original biographical works and the six authoritative collections of Traditions

Imam
The London Mosque

The Author

Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, (1893-1985), a distinguished scholar in world religions, was a member of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, a missionary branch of Islam. He became Foreign Minister of Pakistan in 1947 and for many years led the Pakistan Delegation to the General Assembly of the United Nations. He was President of the Seventeenth Session of the General Assembly. He also served as president of the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

This little volume is a reprint of the first six chapters of his book, *Islam: Its Meaning for Modern-Man*, published by Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

In that book the author describes a faith that commands the devotion of a large section of the world's population. A faith that moulds the way of life of over one billion people all over the world. Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world today.

It contains many fascinating descriptions of Islamic religious practices, and movingly presents the basic beliefs of Muslims. It sets forth a clear appreciation of the faith that has inspired people to follow the Prophet's teaching for over fourteen centuries.

Background

When Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, was born in August, 570, of the Christian era, at Mecca, the principal town of Arabia, the civilizations associated with the names of Egypt, Babylon, and Greece were already matters of history-. They awaited the researches of the archaeologist, the antiquary, and the scholar to be rescued from oblivion.

Europe was still largely pagan, devoted to the worship of Nordic, Teuton, and a host of other gods. In South Asia, Brahmanism and Buddhism had long passed their prime and had entered upon a placid and prolonged old age.

In the Far East, the homely philosophy of Confucius and the “way” of Lao-Tze pursued a sluggish and somnolent course. They had earlier been stirred by the advent of Buddhism into China, but had fallen back into passivity, along with Buddhism. Chinese scholars, feeling that a period of decline and decay had set in made sporadic efforts at revival.

The two great empires of Iran and Byzantium were interlocked in a struggle which ultimately resulted in death for both. The sudden end of one and the slow expiration of the other followed in due course, though the final blows in each case proceeded from a quarter entirely unexpected.

Religion, philosophy, and learning were at a low ebb. The spirit, the mind, and the intellect languished. Mankind had entered upon a decline. The earth seemed to be dying. It was the darkest period of the Dark Ages. There was only an occasional glimmer of light here and there. As the Quran says: “Corruption had overtaken both land and water, in consequence of that which the hands of men had wrought” (30:42).¹

In Arabia the gloom was almost unrelieved. The peninsula was an outlying and neglected region, its inhabitants innocent of learning, philosophy, and science. Although indifferent toward both the arts of peace and the regulations of war, the Arabs were good fighters. The hard and unrelenting struggle for existence in a waste and arid region left little margin for any other pursuit.

The need of water to sustain human and animal existence was urgent and insistent, and largely determined the pattern of life. With the exception of a few townships, Arab life throughout the peninsula was tribal and nomadic. Each tribe moved with its few belongings, its camels and sheep, in search of water and pasture, within a roughly defined area, according to the season of the year and the vagaries of the rainfall.

Mecca, forty miles from the Red Sea, enjoyed a degree of preeminence on account of the Sanctuary attached to the Ka'aba, the House of God, a pilgrim resort traditionally built or rebuilt by Abraham and his son Ishmael. Meccans claimed descent from Abraham through Ishmael. They revered Abraham as patriarch and prophet, and had vague notions of a Supreme God. They believed, however, that it was not possible for ordinary mortals to obtain access to Him save through intercessors. Abraham, being a Holy Man, had direct access to God, they conceived, but for themselves they sought the aid of gods and goddesses, whom they worshiped in the form of idols (39:4). For such intercession, it is related, they had installed as many as three hundred and sixty idols in the Ka'aba itself. Other towns had their own major and minor gods and goddesses. Such idolatry was prevalent throughout Arabia.

The Arabs possessed certain types of virtue. They had a lively sense of honor, and were very sensitive about anything that they deemed touched this honor. The virtue of hospitality was practiced to an exaggerated degree. A guest was entertained and

protected to the utmost limit of the host's capacity. Notions of chivalry were sometimes carried to fantastic lengths. Courage and bravery were called for and were displayed in every exigency of their stern and austere life.

Fighting broke out frequently and tribal raids were common. Brutal and savage deeds, such as cutting off the ears and noses of the enemy dead and tearing out their hearts and livers, were not only practiced, but were gloried in.

Little was known of art. The main channels of artistic and emotional outlet were furnished by poetry and oratory. In consequence, though writing was little known, spoken Arabic had been developed to a very high degree of *excellence*.

The Arabs were not familiar with any of the then *known sciences*, but being a people under the *necessity* of traveling at night -particularly during the hot *season*-across pathless deserts, they were interested in the *elements* of astronomy and had acquired a certain degree of proficiency in them.

Their principal vices were *indulgence* in liquor and gambling, and promiscuity in sexual relations. Woman was held in little honor, and among *certain families* who prided themselves on their status, the practice of infanticide of females was common. In fact, woman was regarded more as a chattel than as a companion or helpmeet, occupying a position only slightly above that of a slave. When a man died his sons inherited all his wives, except the mothers of the sons. Each son, however, was responsible for the welfare of his own mother.

Slavery was a familiar and widespread institution, and there was no limit to the hardship and indignity to which a slave might be exposed. The condition of slaves was a cycle of wretchedness and misery, terminated only by death,

The wealth and substance of the nomadic tribes consisted of horses, camels, sheep, and goats, all of which were highly valued on account of their useful qualities. They served as means of transport and sustenance, and they provided protection in the form of tents and clothing fashioned from their wool, hair, and hide.

The town *dwellers* carried on considerable trade through caravans, which plied not only between the townships of Arabia proper, but as far north as Syria, including *Palestine*, and also to the countries immediately to the east and west of the *northern* part of the *peninsula*. There was a certain amount of trade with India; Indian swords were highly prized.

Dates and liquor were among the products of Arabia, of which the former were much appreciated outside Arabia also. A *certain* amount of *sericulture* was carried on in Yemen and other parts of the peninsula, and silk cloth and stuffs were manufactured.

The political situation was confused and unstable. At the time of the birth of the Prophet, control over Yemen was exercised by Ethiopia, from across the Red Sea. Only that year-A.D. 570-Abraha, Ethiopia's Viceroy in *Yemen*, had led an expedition against Mecca, with the declared intention of destroying the Ka'aba. The expedition proved an utter failure. Abraha's forces, which included an elephant, were struck by a virulent epidemic that destroyed large numbers of them during their encampment in a valley a few miles outside Mecca. The remainder of the group retired in confusion and terror. The year of that expedition is still known as the Year of the Elephant. The event is the subject matter of a brief chapter in the Quran (ch. 105)

Some years later Yemen appears to have passed under the sovereignty of Iran. It was the Iranian Viceroy of Yemen who was directed by the then Emperor of Iran to arrest the Prophet (who

by then had migrated to Medina) and to forward him under guard to the Emperor. For this purpose the Viceroy sent emissaries to Medina. When the Prophet was apprised of their mission, he-wishing time for prayer and reflection-asked them to wait a day or two. During that time the assassination of the Emperor of Iran was revealed to the Prophet. When he informed the emissaries of his revelation and pointed out that the Emperor's orders could no longer have effect, the astonished men hastened back to Yemen to communicate to the Viceroy the Prophet's words-words soon confirmed by dispatches from the Iranian capital. This incident led the Viceroy and his court as well as large numbers of the people of Yemen to embrace Islam.

The Christian tribes in the north of the peninsula were in treaty relations with Byzantium, and enjoyed the protection of the Byzantine Emperor.

Mecca itself was a sort of oligarchy. Its affairs were administered by a Council of Elders, composed of the heads of the leading families of the Qureish, the principal tribe inhabiting Mecca. The Council met as occasion demanded within the precincts of the Ka'aba, in a structure known as the House of Consultation, for the transaction of business relating to the affairs of the town. Different families of the Qureish had been assigned various functions in connection with the service of the Ka'aba, the regulation of the pilgrimage, and the administration of the city (9:19).

The Ka'aba and its enclosure were then, as they are now, the center of life in Mecca.

The prosperity of Mecca depended upon the veneration accorded throughout Arabia to the Ka'aba, which was a center of pilgrimage, and upon the profits derived from the trade

caravans plying regularly to Yemen in the south, to Syria in the north, and even farther afield on occasion (106:2-3).

¹ “Land” here signifies peoples who did not profess belief in any Divine revelation, while “water” refers to peoples who professed belief in such revelation.

Muhammad: Early Years

Muhammad was born an orphan. His father, Abdullah, had died some time before his birth. Abdullah had been the favorite son of Abdul Muttalib, and the latter was delighted at the news of the birth of Abdullah's son, whom he took under his care and protection. In conformity with a practice followed by urban families, Abdul Muttalib entrusted the young Muhammad to the care of Haleema, a member of a desert-dwelling tribe, to be nurtured and brought up in the fresh air of the desert. Haleema's little charge spent three or four years in the desert with his foster parents, being taken at intervals into town so that his mother and grandfather could be reassured with regard to his health and well-being.

Muhammad entertained grateful memories of Haleema's care, and always accorded her the respect and affection due to a mother. In Muhammad's case these sentiments may have been deepened by the sad bereavement he suffered shortly after his return to his mother's care, for his mother died while on a journey to Mecca from Medina, where she had gone with Muhammad to visit some of her relatives. The little boy was thus deprived of the love and care of his mother during his early boyhood. Not long afterward, the death of his grandfather, Abdul Muttalib, removed not only the head of the family but also the person who had been in the place of a father to him since birth.

Muhammad now passed under the care of his uncle, Abu Talib, who had several children of his own and was by no means well-off. Muhammad shared whatever was available with the rest of the family, and was accorded a mother's care and affection by his aunt. He had affectionate recollections of all that his aunt had done for him and had meant to him. Many years later, when she died at a ripe old age, the Prophet himself lowered her body into

the grave, and said of her: "Thou were ever an affectionate mother to me."

Enough is known of the youth and early manhood of Muhammad to indicate that he was gentle, patient, and obedient, respectful toward his elders, affectionate with his companions, and full of compassion for those who, on account of age, infirmity, or adversity, stood in need of help. As he grew to manhood, his good qualities were recognized by his contemporaries. They were impressed by his complete integrity, in word and deed, and he became generally known among them as "*El-Ameen*," meaning "the Trusty," or "the Faithful."

At home he helped with the household chores, and outside he assisted his uncle by carrying out such tasks and duties as pertained to him or were assigned to him. On one occasion, at least, he accompanied his uncle in a trade caravan to Syria. During the course of this journey, Abu Talib observed that his young nephew possessed a reserved and retiring disposition, betrayed no inclination toward levity or indulgence, and was indeed a person of modesty and good sense-a sharp contrast to the behavior of other young men of similar situation whom Abu Talib knew.

While still a young man, Muhammad was employed as a trade agent by Khadija, a wealthy, middle-aged widow of Mecca in business on her own, and he proceeded in that capacity on one or two journeys with a trade caravan. He acquitted himself so well in the discharge of his duties that each venture brought considerable profit to his employer. She received favorable reports of his deportment, habits, and behavior. This must have confirmed the good impression that she had herself conceived of the young man's person and character, and she made up her mind to send him an offer of marriage. When the offer was communicated to Muhammad through his uncle, he took counsel

with the latter, who advised acceptance, and the match was concluded.

Muhammad was twenty-five when he married Khadija, who was forty, had been twice widowed, and had had children. In making his own decision Muhammad must have been principally influenced by the kindly treatment Khadija had accorded him while he worked for her, and the good impression her other qualities had made on him. It is true Khadija was wealthy, but this could not have influenced Muhammad, for it is well known that when Khadija placed all her resources at her husband's disposal, he distributed the greater part of her goods and property among the poor, the needy, and the afflicted, and set free all her slaves. He thus voluntarily chose a life of poverty for himself and his wife, and it speaks highly of Khadija's deep affection for her husband and of her lofty character that she accepted his choice cheerfully.

The marriage, despite the disparity in age and affluence, proved a very happy one. Khadija bore Muhammad several children; of these, the sons died in infancy, but the daughters grew to womanhood and in due course married. The descendants of only one daughter, Fatima, who was married to the Prophet's cousin Ali, son of his uncle Abu Talib, have survived. All those who today claim direct descent from the Prophet are descended through Fatima and her two sons, Hasan and Husain. The latter suffered martyrdom near Kerbala in Iraq, where he is buried.

When at home Muhammad occupied himself, as was his wont, in helping with the household tasks and taking care of his wife and children. He took no prominent part in the life of the city, but did not withdraw himself altogether from it.

Muhammad was a loving and affectionate husband, showing tender regard and consideration for Khadija; she, on her part,

was so devoted a wife that when, fifteen years after their marriage, her husband received the Divine Call, she responded to it immediately, and was a constant source of comfort and support to him throughout the remaining ten years of their life together.

We have, in the previous chapter, attempted an outline of the conditions that prevailed in Arabia at the time of Muhammad's birth and during his youth and early manhood. The preoccupations and pursuits of an average young man of Mecca at that period would comprise a routine of trade, hunting, gambling, participation in drinking bouts (to which those who could afford it invited their friends as often as five times a day), and the indulgences attendant thereupon. This routine was, of course, diversified in individual cases under stress of personal needs and inclinations, family circumstances, or tribal emergencies. Life was subject to many hazards, and resort to arms was had at the slightest provocation. Long-pursued vendettas, often originating in slight incidents, exacted a heavy toll.

From his earliest youth Muhammad kept aloof from all this. He possessed a sensitive mind and a grave and serene disposition. He felt keenly the distress of his fellow beings and reacted very sharply to it, affording such relief and assistance as were within his power.

On one occasion he observed an old slave laboring hard to fulfill his task of drawing water in a heavy bucket for tending his master's garden. Muhammad went to his assistance and drew up a quantity of water, which gave relief to the old man for a short while, so that he could rest and husband his failing strength. Muhammad spoke cheering and comforting words to him, and on leaving him said: "Whenever you feel you are in need of help you can call on Muhammad." Many such incidents are on record.

That which affected his mind most deeply and painfully, however, was the moral and spiritual decline into which his people had fallen, and from which he could see no way of rescuing them, save through Divine guidance and help. He himself had never bowed to an idol or indulged in any idolatrous practices. On the physical side, he had preserved complete purity; he had never gambled or taken liquor, and had led an absolutely chaste life. He enjoyed the trust of his fellow townsmen, and was held in respect by them. An illustration of both the position which he occupied even as a young man in Mecca, and the wise understanding that was characteristic of him is furnished by the story about the Black Stone.

As already observed, the Ka'aba and its precincts were the center of Meccan life, and a great part of the prosperity of the town was connected with the Ka'aba, as the principal resort of pilgrimage in Arabia. The structure of the Ka'aba had fallen into disrepair, and it was decided to rebuild it. The famous Black Stone -a cornerstone, probably of meteoric origin-had to be replaced in position in the southeastern angle of the walls. Several leading families of the Qureish coveted the honor of placing the stone in position, and vehemently pressed their claim. The controversy became heated, tempers rose, and threats were uttered that the sword would be the arbiter. Someone suggested that the matter might be settled peacefully through arbitration. Muhammad chanced to enter the enclosure of the Ka'aba at that moment, and it was agreed that the dispute should be referred to him, and that his decision should be accepted. After ascertaining the cause of the argument, Muhammad spread out his cloak on the ground and placed the Black Stone on it. He then invited the leading members of the families that desired to have the honor of placing the stone in position to lift the cloak and carry the stone in this manner next to the angle of the wall where it had to be placed. Muhammad then lifted the stone and placed it in

position. This satisfied everybody, and resolved a situation that had threatened to become grave to the point of possible bloodshed.

Though ever ready to promote justice and orderliness, and to soften, so far as it lay in his power, the hardships of life for those in distress, Muhammad continued to be tormented by the spectacle of the moral and spiritual degradation of his people, and his mind and soul were in constant travail over it. At the invitation of three young men—each named Fadhal—Muhammad entered into a mutual pledge to go to the assistance of any person who was oppressed by another, to obtain justice for him. That Muhammad did not regard the pledge lightly will appear later.

For the purpose of communing with himself and imploring the light and guidance of the Supreme Being concerning the problems that troubled his mind and soul, he formed the habit of retiring, for several days at a time, to a cave on one of the hills a few miles out of Mecca. There he occupied himself in prayer and contemplation. Taking with him a quantity of dates and a little water by way of provisions, he would spend his days and nights in self-examination, in reflecting on the problems that troubled him, and in prayer and supplication to God. There is no record of the struggle that went on in his soul during these periods of retreat. Muhammad was not a man who talked much about himself. Indeed, he spoke only when the need for speaking arose, and then as briefly as the occasion would permit. With regard to his mental processes and his spiritual reactions during the years between his marriage to Khadija and his receipt of, and response to, the Divine Call, we can only speculate. In the nature of things it is not granted to any of us to probe into the depths of another's soul, to appraise accurately and completely its travail and its ecstasies. That is a holy secret between each individual

and his Maker. Those years were, however, years of preparation, when Muhammad's soul was being deepened and proved and made ready for the heavy responsibility that the Divine Will had decreed should be placed on him.

In the Quran we read God's word concerning Moses: "I wrapped thee with love from Me, and this I did that thou mightest be reared before My eye ... We proved thee in various ways ... Then thou camest up to the standard, O Moses, and I chose thee for Myself" (20:40-42)

As with Moses, so with Muhammad.

Muhammad is reminded of this in the Quran: "Did He not find thee an orphan and take thee under His protection? He found thee perplexed in search of Him and guided thee unto Himself. He found thee in want and provided thee with abundance" (93:7-9).

The Prophet at Mecca

Muhammad was forty years old—in the year 610 of the Christian era—when the Divine Call came to him in his retreat in Hira, the cave to which he was in the habit of repairing for prayer and contemplation. He beheld a gracious Presence, who asked him to recite. Muhammad answered that he knew not how to recite. The Presence insisted: “Recite in the name of thy Lord Who created: Created man from a clot of blood. Recite! Thy Lord is the Most Beneficent, Who taught man by the pen, taught him what he knew not” (96:2-6).

Muhammad repeated the words as commanded. The Angel then vanished. Muhammad, overpowered by the experience, immediately made his way home, all atremble. He told Khadija what had happened. He expressed fearful apprehension whether a frail human being like himself could prove equal to the heavy responsibility that the incident portended God was about to lay upon him.

“Surely, God will never suffer thee to fail,” was Khadija’s comforting response. “Thou art kind and considerate toward thy kin. Thou helpest the poor and forlorn and bearest their burdens, Thou strivest to restore the high moral qualities that thy people have lost. Thou honorest the guest and goest to the assistance of those in distress.”

Khadija’s observations on this occasion throw a flood of light on the Prophet’s character as observed by his closest and most intimate companion. The honest testimony of husband or wife with regard to the character and disposition of the other is of the utmost value, for no other person has the opportunity to make so accurate an estimate based upon close observation and personal experience.

Khadija suggested that Muhammad go with her to her aged cousin Waraqa, who was a Christian hermit, and relate the experience to him. When Waraqa heard the account of the incident he observed: "The Angel that descended on Moses has descended on thee. I wish I would be alive to give thee my support when thy people turn thee out."

"And will they turn me out?" Muhammad exclaimed in surprise.

"Never has that come to any which has come to thee but that his people have turned against him," Waraqa replied.

Waraqa's reference to Moses was probably based upon the prophecy contained in the words: "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto My words which he shall speak in My name, I will require it of him" (Deut. 18:18-19).

It is striking that the first revelation that came to the Prophet commanded him: "Recite in the name of thy Lord." Every chapter of the Quran opens with: "In the name of God, Ever Gracious, Most Merciful."

The call was Muhammad's first experience of verbal revelation. A tremendous concept is conveyed by the verses revealed to him on this occasion. Muhammad is warned that God has chosen him as the instrument for conveying His message to mankind. The Arabic word "iqra" connotes both recitation and conveying by word of mouth. This message is to be conveyed to mankind in the name of God who is the Creator of the Universe. Attention is drawn to the insignificant origin of man, but the comforting assurance follows that man's progress and development are under the fostering care of the Most Beneficent, that God's

beneficence has decreed that many and varied avenues of knowledge shall be thrown open to man, and that all this increase and accession of knowledge shall be promoted through writing. One should remember in this connection that the Prophet himself was not able to read or write (29:49), and that proficiency in reading and writing was the privilege of only a few at that time in Arabia.

For a while there was no further experience of the same kind; and then the Prophet began to receive revelation at brief intervals. He has described the experience vividly, in this way: "Revelation comes to me in different ways. Sometimes the words strike directly at my heart, like the ringing of a bell, and this is physically hard on me. Sometimes I hear the words as if spoken from behind a veil. Sometimes I see a Presence that speaks the words to me." This is confirmed by the Q,uran (42:52-53).

Thus it is clear that revelation in this context meant direct verbal revelation, conveyed in any one of the forms just mentioned. There are other forms of revelation also, which will be referred to later in the chapter dealing with that subject.

Soon the Prophet was commanded to proclaim widely and openly that which was being conveyed to him, and to turn aside from those who ascribed associates to God (15:95) His attempts to convey God's message to those around him in Mecca at first drew only ridicule upon him. Four persons, however, believed in him from the very outset: his wife, Khadija; his young cousin, Ali, son of Abu Talib, a lad only eleven years of age; his freedman, Zaid; and his friend, Abu Bakr.

Zaid was a well-born, intelligent young man, who had been captured while in his teens in a tribal raid, and was sold from one person to another until finally he was purchased by Khadija. Zaid was given his freedom by Muhammad after his marriage to

Khadija, but he chose voluntarily to stay on with Muhammad. Some time later, his father and uncle traced him to Mecca and came with the purpose of ransoming him from Muhammad. The Prophet told them that Zaid was already a free man and that there was no question of any ransom. Pleased with this news, the father invited his son to accompany them home. Zaid had naturally been overcome with emotion on meeting his father and uncle, more particularly at their reminder that his mother had remained grief-stricken all through the period of separation from him and was impatiently awaiting his restoration to the family. He acknowledged the force of all this, but said his devotion to Muhammad had grown so deep that he could not bear the idea of parting from him. He sent loving messages to his mother, but was firm in his resolve not to leave Muhammad. When Muhammad found that Zaid was determined to remain with him, he took Zaid to the Ka'aba and, in the presence of his father and his uncle, announced that not only was Zaid a free man, but that henceforth he would be treated like a son.

Abu Bakr, who had been away from Mecca when the Prophet proclaimed his mission, returned to hear reports that his friend Muhammad must have become afflicted with madness, inasmuch as he had announced that God had commanded him to proclaim His Unity and to denounce idols. Abu Bakr on hearing this exclaimed: "That mouth utters no lies!" He then sought out the Prophet and inquired whether what he had heard was true. The Prophet tried to explain, but Abu Bakr was insistent that his question be answered Yes or No. The Prophet then affirmed that what Abu Bakr had heard was true. Said Abu Bakr: "I believe." He added that he had not wished to hear any explanation at this stage because of his firm conviction that the Prophet was incapable of uttering an untruth, let alone inventing a lie against God.

These four joined the Prophet and undertook to help him spread the Divine Light. When this became known to the Meccans, they laughed in derision. But they did not laugh long. Verse by verse the revelation proceeded, “precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little there a little” (Isa. 28:13) until many wondered, and some began to be drawn to it.

Among those who still resisted, mockery gave way to active concern. They awakened to the fact that the message Muhammad proclaimed threatened their whole way of life and their very means of subsistence. If the worship of idols were abandoned, they reasoned, Mecca would cease to be a resort for pilgrims, would lose its position as a leading town, and would see its main industry wither. Even the trade caravans might be altogether diverted from Mecca. It was, therefore, resolved to suppress by use of force this threat to their established way of life and to their prosperity.

The new doctrine made a strong appeal to the weak and the oppressed. The slaves, who suffered extreme hardship and indignity, began to hope that the Prophet’s message might bring deliverance to them. Women, who were in some respects treated worse than animals, began to look up, and felt that the time was nigh when they might gain a position of dignity and honor beside their fathers, husbands, and sons. Young men were inspired with visions of a noble and dignified existence. The early converts came from the ranks of such as these. As the little band grew in number, the Meccans embarked upon a course of persecution which grew more cruel and savage as time passed, but their efforts failed to arrest the progress of the new doctrine of the Unity of God, the dignity and equality of man, and the lofty and noble goal of human existence.

None was secure against persecution, not even the Prophet himself, who was continuously subjected to all kinds of indignities and molestations. But the worst affected were the slaves who accepted Islam, and whose masters inflicted unbearable torments upon them in vain attempts to force them to recant. They were taken out during the scorching heat of the midday sun and were made to lie down on their bare backs on the burning sands and rocks, while sun-heated rocks and pebbles were heaped upon their bare bodies. Even inside the town, boys were incited to make them victims of their cruel sport. They would tie ropes to the ankles of a slave and drag him through the streets paved with rough, jagged stones, leaving him a lacerated mass of bruises and bleeding cuts. Some succumbed under such tortures. Nor were women spared, some of them being subjected to shameless and unmentionable torture.

The Prophet's soul was tormented by the sufferings thus inflicted upon his helpless followers for no reason save that they said: "God alone is our Lord." He could do nothing to alleviate his own or their lot. He counseled patience and steadfastness, and assured them that God would open a way for them.

The Qureish, becoming more and more apprehensive of the inroads being made by the new doctrine, sent a delegation to Abu Talib, the Prophet's uncle. They asserted that though his nephew's denunciation of idol worship was intolerable to them, they had so far refrained from taking any extreme measures out of respect for Abu Talib, who was a revered chief and whose protection Muhammad enjoyed. Could not Abu Talib persuade his nephew to give up the preaching of the new doctrine, perhaps on pain of being disowned? They made it plain that if Abu Talib did not adopt this course, they would be compelled to disown their chief.

Abu Talib agreed to do what he could. But when he spoke to his nephew gravely, conveying what the delegation had said, Muhammad firmly replied that, while he lamented his uncle's dilemma, he was under Divine orders and could not disobey.

"Do not give up your people, Uncle," Muhammad said. "I do not ask you to stand by me. You may disown me as they have suggested. As for me, the One and Only God is my witness when I say that if they were to place the sun on my right and the moon on my left I would not desist from preaching the truth that God commands. I must go on doing so until the end."

Abu Talib plunged into deep thought. He had not himself declared his belief in the Prophet's message, but he was very fond of his nephew and must have felt a surge of pride at Muhammad's firm and noble resolve, which he had expressed, to carry out his mission as commanded by God. Finally he raised his head, saying:

"Son of my brother, go thy way: do thy duty as thou seest it; my people may disown me but I shall stand by thee."

As the tempo of bitter persecution continued to mount, the Prophet advised some of his followers to leave Mecca and migrate across the Red Sea to Ethiopia, where they would find conditions more bearable under the rule of the Christian Emperor. A small band under the leadership of a cousin of the Prophet departed for Ethiopia. A delegation of the Qureish followed them, demanding of the Emperor that the fugitives be delivered to them. The Emperor heard both sides and rejected the demand of the Meccans.

The Qureish delegation then adopted a clever stratagem. Seeking out the bishops and other dignitaries of the Christian Church, they charged that the followers of the Prophet were

adherents of a new creed which did not hold Jesus in honor. They hoped that this would set the Emperor and his Court against the fugitives and that the Muslims would be expelled from the country in disgrace. When the Emperor summoned both sides to his presence again, the bishops and nobles urged that the Meccan fugitives deserved no sympathy on account of what the Qureish had alleged against them. The Emperor made inquiry concerning this from the Muslims, who replied that far from this allegation being true, they held both Jesus and his mother Mary in great honor and believed in Jesus as a righteous prophet of God. Their leader, the cousin of the Prophet, recited relevant verses from the Quran in support of their statement (19:17-41) The Emperor, deeply affected by the recitation, affirmed the truth of these verses and stated flatly that he believed neither more nor less concerning Jesus than that which had been recited. He dismissed the Qureish and told the Muslims that they could dwell in the land without fear of molestation.

About this time, the persecuted and harassed Muslims in Mecca received some support and encouragement by the adherence of Umar to Islam. Umar was a leading Meccan whose courage and prowess were well known. Much troubled by the strife agitating Mecca as a result of the preaching of the new doctrine by Muhammad, he made up his mind to put an end to it all by putting an end to Muhammad. On the way to search out the Prophet, he was stopped by a friend who inquired whither he was bent. Umar explained his design; the friend retorted that he should look nearer home first, inasmuch as his sister and brother-in-law had already embraced Islam. In a rage, Umar stormed into his brother-in-law's house and by his violent entry interrupted a recitation of the Quran to which his sister and her husband had been listening. Umar drew his sword to attack his brother-in-law, but his sister parried the blow, and received a slight injury which drew blood.

This served to check further violence on the part of Umar, and in the end he asked that he might also hear what was being recited to them,

Umar listened to the recitation (20:15-17) and marveled at it. "Surely this is the truth," he exclaimed. Proceeding immediately to the Prophet, he made his submission to Islam.

Umar's acceptance of Islam was fervently welcomed by the Muslims, who had hitherto always congregated in secret and had performed their worship five times a day behind closed doors. They now felt that with a man of Umar's standing among them, they could worship God openly.

Umar's conversion did not, however, bring about any change in the attitude of the Meccans. Umar was treated in the same manner as the rest of the Muslims. Persecution grew more bitter and intense. Aiming to starve them out, a complete boycott of the Muslims and those who sided with them was put into effect. The small band of Muslims, together with some members of the Prophet's family who, though they did not believe in his mission nevertheless stood by him against Meccan persecution, were completely blockaded within a narrow enclosure belonging to Abu Talib. Contact with them for any purpose whatever was forbidden.

However, this measure also failed. The Prophet and his companions, refusing to entertain any thought of surrender or compromise on so transcendent a matter, steadfastly endured extremes of privation. At night some of them managed to slip out to procure meager provisions from people who were known to be sympathetic but dared not openly show their sympathy. Often, however, there was nothing but hunger and attempts to assuage its pangs with grass and leaves.

This state of affairs continued for nearly three years, until finally five leading Meccans reacted against the savagery and inhumanity of their fellow citizens, and let it be known that they would invite the Prophet and his companions to come out of their place of retreat and to go about their business as before. Thus was the blockade lifted. But the privations and hardships endured by the Muslims had gravely affected the health of both Khadija and Abu Talib. Khadija died within a few days, and Abu Talib's end came a month thereafter.

Though the boycott was lifted, every obstruction was placed in the way of the Prophet to prevent him from establishing contact with his fellow townsmen. The death of his faithful and beloved wife left him bereft of his principal source of earthly comfort and consolation, and the death of his uncle exposed him to greater ill-treatment and persecution. In dozens of ways his opponents made it almost impossible for him to leave his house to carry his message to any section of the people of Mecca or to those who might be on a visit there. Because of these circumstances Muhammad decided to go to Ta'if, a town about sixty miles southeast of Mecca, which was also a resort of pilgrimage and was more pleasantly situated than Mecca itself. The people of Ta'if had close trade relations with the people of Mecca. They carried on agriculture and fruit-growing in addition to their trade activities. On his journey to Ta'if, the Prophet was accompanied by Zaid, his freedman.

In Ta'if the leading townsmen received Muhammad and freely let him have his say—but paid little heed to his message. After a while they even showed signs of apprehension lest his welcome in Ta'if might embroil them with the Meccans. So they left him to be dealt with by street urchins and the riff raff of the town. The Prophet and his companion were finally turned out by mocking

and jeering crowds who pelted them with stones. Both were wounded and bleeding as they left Ta'if behind them.

Weary and sore, they dragged themselves along a short distance, and when quite clear of the town, stopped in a vineyard belonging to two Meccans. The owners, who happened to be in the vineyard at the time, had been among Muhammad's persecutors in Mecca, but on this occasion they felt some sympathy toward their fellow townsman and permitted him to rest there a while. Presently they sent him a tray of grapes by the hand of a Christian slave. This slave, Addas by name, belonged to Nineveh. The Prophet took up a grape, and before putting it into his mouth he recited what has become the Muslim grace: "In the name of God, Ever Gracious, Most Merciful." This excited the curiosity of Addas who inquired the identity of the stranger. The Prophet told him, and the conversation that ensued led Addas to declare his acceptance of Islam, so that Muhammad's journey to Ta'if did not prove entirely fruitless.

He had now a difficult problem to resolve. He had left Mecca and he had been rejected by Ta'if. Under Meccan custom, he could not go back there unless his re-entry was sponsored by some leading Meccan. There was nowhere else to go. He prayed earnestly for light, guidance, and help, and then set out with Zaid on the return journey to Mecca. He stopped on the way at a place called Nakhla for a few daps and sent word to Mut'im bin 'Adi, a leading Meccan, asking whether he could be permitted to return to Mecca. Mut'im replied that he was prepared to sponsor his re-entry into Mecca, and when the Prophet approached Mecca Mut'im and his sons met him in the outskirts and escorted him back into the town.

But on the whole Mecca was as hostile as before, and the Meccans were determined that the doctrine preached by Muhammad should gain no footing among them. They resorted to every

device to make life impossible for the Prophet and his followers in Mecca.

Muhammad's prayers and the revelations that came to him steadily were his only sources of consolation and strength. The latest revelations began to hint at the necessity for him to leave Mecca. Mecca was the town of his birth, where he had spent the whole of his life, had married, where his children had been born, and where the Divine Call had come to him. Despite the bitter and cruel persecution that he and his followers continued to suffer, its people were very dear to his heart and he knew that the parting, whenever it came, would be hard for him to bear. But his life was completely dedicated to his mission and he was ready to carry out in good spirit whatever might be God's pleasure concerning him. The painful prospect of having to leave Mecca was, however, softened by the Divine assurance that God would surely bring him back to it (28:86).

The determination of his next move came about as a result of a long-followed custom of the Prophet, namely, to try to make contact with parties from other parts of the country who visited Mecca on the occasion of the annual pilgrimage, and to make an effort to interest them in his mission and message. On one such occasion he met a party of six or seven pilgrims from Medina, then known as Yathrib, who were encamped in a valley outside Mecca. At that time Medina was inhabited by two Arab and three Jewish tribes. The Arab tribes-Aus and Khazraj-were pagan idol worshippers, but had to some degree become familiar with Jewish traditions. They had heard from their Jewish fellow townsmen that the latter were expecting the advent of a Prophet which had been foretold in their Scriptures (Deut. 18:18).

The men whom the Prophet encountered on this occasion belonged to the Khazraj tribe. When he told them that God had appointed him as Messenger and had charged him with a

message for mankind, they gave him a ready and eager hearing. In the end they declared their faith in him and his message, agreeing to convey it to their fellow townsmen on their return to Medina.

The following year twelve men of Medina, representing both the Khazraj and Aus tribes, came to the pilgrimage and met the Prophet in secret. It was necessary to take precautions lest the Meccans learn of their adherence to Islam and try to create difficulties for the people of Medina performing the pilgrimage. When the Prophet explained his mission in greater detail to them, they announced their own acceptance of Islam, and also the readiness of many people in Medina to accept it. The Prophet asked them to ascertain from their fellow Muslims and their fellow tribesmen whether they would be willing to give shelter to the harassed and persecuted Muslims of Mecca. They promised to bring back a reply the following year. But before the year was up, the Prophet had to send someone to Medina to answer the many eager inquiries about Islam provoked by the tribesmen as they reported their meeting with the Prophet. Mus'ab, the Meccan Muslim sent to Medina, instructed the new converts in the teachings and commandments of the faith.

In the meantime, mounting persecution in Mecca made life increasingly unbearable for the Muslims. When the season of the pilgrimage came round again, a large and representative delegation from Medina, including two women, met the Prophet and assured him that not only were their people in Medina ready to receive and give shelter to their brethren in faith from Mecca, but that they were very eager and would be greatly honored to receive the Prophet himself if he decided to go to Medina.

On this occasion the Prophet was accompanied by his uncle, Abbas, who, though he had not yet accepted Islam, was fond of

the Prophet and was anxious for his safety. He warned the Medina delegation that they were undertaking a heavy responsibility in inviting the Prophet to Medina. The Qureish would pursue him with their rancor and would rouse other tribes against him and his adherents in Medina. He asked them to pause and reflect before they incurred the risk involved in their offer. He pointed out to them that though Mecca was bitterly hostile to the Prophet, his own family stood by him and would give him their protection as far as they were able. In Medina, he would be exposed to every danger and hazard.

The leader of the Medina delegation replied that they and their people had carefully considered the hazards and believed any risk involved to be of little account. They would guard the Prophet with their lives, and no harm would come to him so long as any one of them was alive to prevent it.

Abbas also tried to dissuade the Prophet from accepting the invitation extended to him by the Medina delegation. The Prophet, however, decided that the Muslims of Mecca would migrate to Medina and that for himself he would await God's command. The Prophet then admonished the members of the delegation to order their lives in full conformity with God's command and His will, and to carry the message of Islam to all and sundry.

He then returned to Mecca.

The Muslims in Mecca were told that their brethren in Medina were ready to receive them and that those who were able to leave Mecca should proceed to Medina quietly and without creating a stir. Family after family made their preparations and departed in silence. The Meccans found that house after house occupied by the Muslims was being evacuated so that sometimes in the course of a week a whole row of houses would become

empty. And so it came about that after a short period the only adult male Muslims left in Mecca were the Prophet, Abu Bakr, and Ali, and a handful of slaves, who had no choice in the matter. The Meccans took alarm that the Prophet might soon move beyond their reach, and they decided to put a violent end to him on a particular night. At this point, the Prophet received God's command to leave Mecca, and it so happened that the night fixed for his departure was the one that his opponents had chosen for their murderous designs. Abu Bakr, having learned from the Prophet of the decision to leave Mecca, asked whether he would be permitted to come along, and the Prophet gave his assent.

The following evening the Prophet left his house as soon as it was dark while those who had designs upon his life were collecting round the house in ones and twos, and proceeded to the rendezvous with Abu Bakr. The two then made their way out of Mecca and went up one of the surrounding hills, there to take shelter in a cave called "Thaur," which had an entrance so narrow that a person had to lie flat and crawl into it. It was not a very safe place to spend much time in, as there was considerable danger from poisonous snakes and vipers. But perhaps for that very reason it afforded a chance of security against pursuit and discovery.

During the course of the night the Prophet's would-be assailants discovered that he was no longer in the house. At daybreak they took counsel together and decided to follow his tracks, which, they found, were soon joined by those of Abu Bakr. The tracker led them up the hill to the mouth of the cave, and there the tracks disappeared.

"The fugitives have not gone any farther; they have either sunk into the earth or ascended into the sky!" exclaimed the tracker, puzzled. The others ridiculed him, as there was nowhere for

anybody to go except inside the cave; and this possibility they ruled out. Who would take the risk of serious bodily harm, and possibly death, from the vipers that abounded inside and around the cave?

Inside, Abu Bakr heard the voices of the men, and through the narrow opening of the cave he could observe some of them moving about. He was much afraid, knowing that if their hiding place were discovered, serious harm would come to the Prophet. When he mentioned his fear, the Prophet replied: "Grieve not. We are not two only; there is a third with us, even God" (9:40).

The pursuers returned to Mecca foiled in their immediate objective, but still firm in their purpose. They announced that anybody who brought back the fugitives alive or dead would receive a reward of one hundred camels. This was widely proclaimed around Mecca.

The Prophet and Abu Bakr spent two nights and two days in the cave. Each night a shepherd in the employ of Abu Bakr, who had been instructed to graze his goats near the cave, brought a she-goat to the entrance of the cave and milked it for the benefit of his master and his friend. Some provisions were also sent from Mecca by Abu Bakr's daughter, Asma. On the second night, Abu Bakr sent a message to a servant in Mecca, asking him to bring to the cave the following evening the two camels which Abu Bakr had specially reserved for this occasion, along with a trusted guide who could lead them to Medina. The party of four then started on the journey to Medina.

They had not proceeded far from Mecca when a Bedouin chief, Suraqa, attempted to intercept them, hoping to turn them over to the Meccans and thus earn the proffered reward. He was dissuaded from his purpose, made his submission to the Prophet, and then the party proceeded on their journey.

Ten days after leaving Mecca, the small party arrived within sight of Medina, where they were joyfully welcomed by the Muslims from Medina and those from Mecca who had preceded them. The Prophet decided to stop for a few days in Quba, a suburb of Medina, and then proceed to Medina. On arrival in Medina his first act was to purchase the site where his camel had stopped, for the purpose of building a mosque thereon. He then accepted the offer of a Muslim whose house was nearest to the selected site to put him up temporarily, while the mosque and his own quarters next to it here being built.

The Prophet at Medina

With the arrival of the Prophet in Medina (in the year 622 of the Christian era), Islam began to spread rapidly among the two Arab tribes of the town. But, as often happens in a mass *movement*, not all who declared their adherence to the faith were inspired by sincerity and high ideals.

Some time *before the Emigration*, as it has since been called, the Aus and Khazraj, wearied by their long, drawn-out mutual hostility, which had often erupted into fighting and had exacted a heavy toll of life, had decided to put an end to this state of affairs and to set up a form of administration in Medina which should have the support of both tribes and should also be acceptable to the three Jewish tribes. For this purpose it had been agreed that Abdullah bin Ubayy ibn Salul, chief of the Khazraj, should be elected king of Medina. This plan had not yet been put into effect when the Prophet was invited to come to Medina. When he arrived it was generally felt that he was the most appropriate person to take on the responsibility of administering the affairs of Medina. Under his direction a covenant was drawn up which was accepted by both Arabs and Jews. A common citizenship of Medina was established and conditions were prescribed for the regulation of the affairs of the town as well as for organizing its internal order and external security.

The principal conditions were that the internal affairs of each section would be regulated according to its own laws and customs, but that if the security of Medina were threatened from outside all sections would co-operate with each other in its defense. No section would *enter* into any separate treaty relations with any outside tribe, nor would any section be compelled to join in any fighting which should take place outside Medina. The

final determination of disputes would be referred to the Prophet, and his decision would be accepted and carried out. This became, as it were, the Charter of Medina. Thus was the Republic of Medina set up.

Abdullah bin Ubayy was deeply chagrined at the loss of a crown, which, before the arrival of the Prophet, he had thought was assured for him. He became the leader of the disaffected party in Medina, This party was a source of constant worry and insecurity for the Prophet and the Muslims. It is referred to in the Quran, at various places, as “the hypocrites.” (*See chapter 63*)

The Jews, on their part, were not disposed to let the Prophet remain in peace at Medina. They were, it is true, eagerly awaiting the advent of a Prophet foretold in their Scriptures (Deut. 18:18), but they felt that to accept an Arab as the fulfillment of that prophecy would raise the prestige of the Arabs above that of the Jews in the religious and spiritual spheres and this, as Jehovah’s chosen people, they were not prepared to tolerate. The Quran states that the Beni Israel, i.e., the descendants of Jacob, were the recipients of God’s favors (2:48, 123), but it also recites some of the causes that had led to their fall from grace, e.g., their breaking of their covenant with God, their denial of the Signs of God, their seeking to kill the prophets who were sent to them, their disbelief in Jesus, their uttering against Mary a grievous calumny, their claim that they had put Jesus to death on the cross, their taking interest though they had been forbidden it, their devouring people’s wealth wrongfully, their transgression in respect of the observance of the Sabbath, etc. It also holds out a promise of redemption: “But those among them who are firmly grounded in knowledge . . . believe in what has been sent down to thee and what was sent down before thee, and those who observe Prayer and those who

pay the Zakat and those who believe in God and the Last Day: Upon those will We surely bestow a great reward (4:156-163).

While not daring to oppose the Prophet openly, they let no opportunity pass of conspiring and intriguing against him and the Muslims both inside Medina and outside it.

The Meccan Muslims had found a place of refuge in Medina, and they could now openly perform their daily worship of God, together with their brethren of Medina, without hindrance. They appreciated this as a great boon, but in Medina also the Muslims were exposed to many hazards and had to keep constantly on the alert. The Prophet himself, who was responsible for the security not only of the Muslims but of the whole of Medina, and had many more cares added to the discharge of his mission as a Prophet, found little time for sleep or rest. When this became known, the Muslims arranged to mount guard by turns outside his quarters at night so that he could have a few hours of sleep.

Besides the internal problems of Medina and the dangers and hazards confronting the Muslims, and most of all the Prophet himself, a formidable threat was soon added from Mecca.

When the Meccans learned that the Prophet had arrived safely at Medina and had been joyfully received there by the Muslims and that Islam was making progress among the two Arab tribes there, they resolved to adopt coercive measures to secure his expulsion from Medina. They addressed a letter to Abdullah bin Ubayy, warning him and the people of Medina that if they did not expel the Prophet from the city-or, failing that, did not take up arms against him and the Muslims, jointly with the Meccans the Meccans would come with a mighty force and put to the sword all the male adults and enslave all the women.

On receipt of this letter, Abdullah held a secret council of his supporters and proposed that, in view of the Meccan ultimatum, the only course open to them was to force the Prophet and his followers to leave Medina. When news of this reached the Prophet, he went to see Abdullah and tried to dissuade him from embarking on such a course, pointing out that any such adventure could lead only to his own ruin. For the time being Abdullah forbore, but he never abandoned the hope that an opportunity might arise when he could take measures to rid Medina of the Prophet and the Muslims, and thus secure his own recognition as the chief and ruler of Medina.

Saad bin Muaz, chief of the Aus and a brave and sincere Muslim, visited Mecca about this time to perform the customary circuit of the Ka'aba. He was noticed by Abu Jahl, a Meccan chief and a sworn enemy of the Prophet, who accosted him, asking how he dared come to Mecca to perform the circuit when it was well known that he had once sheltered the Prophet in Medina. Did he not realize that by giving shelter to Muhammad, the people of Medina had earned the enmity of the Meccans and could no longer be permitted to perform the rites and ceremonies connected with the Ka'aba? Saad retorted that if this were the attitude of the Meccans, their caravans plying between Mecca and Syria would no longer enjoy the right of free passage between Medina and the coast.

And so the stage was set for open warfare between the Meccans and the Muslims in Medina.

Meanwhile the Prophet was organizing the Muslims as a religious community who should put into effect all the commandments and values inculcated by Islam. His undertaking involved tremendous responsibility. To weld into a homogeneous whole a community made up of Meccan refugees and Medina Arabs drawn from tribes which had till lately been *enemies*,

and to instruct them in ways which would make their individual and communal lives wholly beneficent for themselves as well as for those who came in contact with them demanded unremitting attention and every moment of available time. It was a monumental task even for a man with the capacity of the Prophet, strengthened and reinforced by Divine revelation. The administration of the affairs of Medina and its people was an onerous addition to this main purpose. The threat of invasion from Mecca greatly multiplied the Prophet's responsibilities and preoccupations, and taxed his capacities to the utmost. Yet he set about doing whatever was needful in a serene and steadfast spirit, putting his complete trust in God and exhorting the Muslims in their turn to be patient and steadfast, and constantly to foster their communion with God, so as to make it a rich and living experience.

All due precautions were taken. For, though God's promise of succor for, and ultimate triumph of, Islam was wholly true and completely to be depended upon, God required that every effort be put forth in support of the cause. Therein lies the secret of the strength of Islam as a faith. The fullest confidence in, and reliance upon, God's grace and help and the putting forth of the utmost effort that man is capable of-both these in combination, as taught by God himself, help achieve the goal (53:39-40). All success in every beneficent endeavor comes from God, but it follows upon sincere and steadfast effort combined with perfect trust and humble supplication to God.

It was necessary to know what plans and preparations were afoot in Mecca. The Prophet, therefore, sent out small parties from time to time to reconnoiter along the routes to and from Mecca and the surrounding area. He learned that the Meccans were seeking to incite other tribes against the Muslims and to strengthen their own position with alliances. The Prophet made efforts to

establish friendly relations with outside tribes whenever the opportunity offered itself, the purpose being to organize resistance to aggression and to secure freedom of conscience and belief for everyone. This was the beginning of the Pax Islamica.

A reconnoitering party was sometimes involved in an incident or minor skirmish, but this was unavoidable in view of the hostile designs and activities of the Qureish. It was felt on both sides, however, that matters could not continue as they were and that a clash was inevitable inasmuch as the Qureish were determined to stamp out the faith preached by the Prophet before its adherents gained enough support and strength to resist successfully any force that might be mustered against them.

One of the devices of the Meccans was to use their trade caravans plying between Mecca and Syria to incite the tribes on their route against the Muslims. They even diverted these caravans from their regular route so that these activities could be spread out as widely as possible. Everybody in Mecca had a direct interest in these caravans, which were substantial affairs, as practically all the savings of the Meccans were invested in them. Each caravan was accompanied by an armed guard, which might consist of a force of from one hundred to five hundred men, depending upon the size of the caravan and the value of the merchandise it carried-a formidable threat to the security of Medina.

About a year after the Emigration, intelligence began to reach the Prophet that the Meccans were preparing a strong force to advance upon Medina. Their pretext was that one of their large caravans returning from Syria was likely to be attacked by the Muslims at a point near Medina, and that an adequate force had to proceed north to secure its safe passage. And they may well have been genuinely apprehensive concerning the safe passage of the caravan, in view of their behavior toward the Prophet and

the Muslims over the years in Mecca and Medina. It was a large caravan, carrying valuable merchandise; but it was accompanied by an adequate armed force which has been estimated at four to five hundred men. Although the Meccans knew that the Muslims could not possibly muster a force strong enough to constitute a real threat to the safety of the caravan, they went ahead with their warlike preparations. By the time the Meccan army set out on its march north, news arrived that the caravan had passed safely through the danger zone, and that no attempt had been made to interfere with it. Nevertheless, the Meccan army continued its march in the direction of Medina.

In the meantime, the Prophet was taking stock of his own position. Permission to take up arms in defense had been accorded in Divine revelation (22:40-42). The Prophet assembled a force of about three hundred Muslims from Mecca and Medina, and marched out with them. (The exact number was 313). This heterogeneous body-it scarcely deserved the designation "force"-was united only by the common bond of faith and the determination to die in defense of that faith. Although it included some of the older Meccan Muslims who were experienced fighters, the greater number were young men, some still in their teens, who had had little, if any, combat experience. Their devotion to their faith and their zeal in its support were their only qualifications. Ill-armed, in poor physical condition because of the privations they had been enduring, and with but two horses and a few camels, they presented a pitiful contrast to the Meccan army, which consisted of at least a thousand tried warriors who were well-armed and well-mounted.

Those who accompanied the Prophet as he set forth from Medina knew that they had been called out to take up arms in defense of their faith, but they were not aware of their exact objective. There had been rumors both of the trade caravan with its armed

escort passing near Medina, and of the Meccan army marching north, but the Prophet had said nothing about them. Some of those with the Prophet hoped that if there were to be a clash it would be with the caravan rather than with the army (8:8). Not till the party was two days' march out of Medina did the Prophet disclose that they would have to face the strong, well-equipped force advancing from Mecca. On the next day the Muslims, having arrived at a place called Badr, took up their position near a well. The Prophet had been advised by one of the Muslims to make camp there on account of the supply of water which was available, although the ground underfoot was sandy and the few experienced fighters in the group were apprehensive that this would be a serious handicap during battle because the sand would not permit easy and rapid movement. The Meccan force on its arrival took up a position opposite on firm clay soil.

Night set in, The Prophet spent the greater part of it in earnest prayer and supplication, He knew, none better, that the revelation being vouchsafed through him to mankind was the guarantee and the source of man's honor, dignity, and welfare both here and in the Hereafter, He had firm faith in every Divine promise, but he also realized fully the complete supremacy of the Divine Being and the many weaknesses that beset mortals. He prayed for succour; he prayed for strength; he prayed for steadfastness for himself as well as for those with him. Part of his prayer and supplication during that fateful night has been preserved and has come down to us. It reveals the core of his anxiety: "O Lord, if Thou wilt suffer this little band to perish, Thy Holy Name will no more be glorified on earth and there will be none left to worship Your Glorious Majesty in true sincerity."

Morning approached. The Prophet and the Muslims beheld the dawn of the day which was to decide the issue of one of the most fateful contests ever waged in the history of man between the

forces of truth and righteousness, and those of falsehood and ignorance. There was a shower of rain which firmed the sand underfoot while turning the clay into slippery mud, and the Muslims were comforted and encouraged. The Prophet drew up his men in battle array and gave them instructions, but he repeatedly went back to prayer under a hastily improvised shelter. When the fighting began, the Prophet was prostrate before his Lord in an agony of supplication. Abu Bakr approached him and put a gentle hand upon his shoulder, saying: "Messenger of God, thou hast prayed enough." The Prophet raised himself and announced to the people that God had given him to understand that the time had arrived for the fulfillment of the Prophecy revealed several years earlier at Mecca: "Do they say, 'We are a victorious host?' The hosts shall soon be routed and will turn their backs in flight. Aye, the Hour is their appointed time; and the Hour will be most calamitous and most bitter" (54:45-47).

The issue did not remain long in doubt. The flower of toe Qureish was left upon the field, dead and dying (Isa. 21:16-17). Abu Jahl, the bitterest enemy of the Prophet and the commander of the Meccan forces, was mortally wounded at the commencement of the battle. As he lay dying, he lamented his fate, not so much that he was about to die, but that his death should have been compassed by two striplings, twelve and thirteen years old, of the non-warrior tribes of Medina. Several prisoners were taken, among them the Prophet's uncle, Abbas, who had been coerced into joining the Meccan forces, and one of his sons-in-law.

The Prophet, while giving thanks to God for the great deliverance which He had vouchsafed, was grieved that so many of the Meccans had perished in pursuit of their vain purpose. On beholding the prisoners bound and held fast, tears coursed down his cheeks. When Umar inquired why, in the midst of victory, he

felt so grieved, the Prophet pointed to the prisoners and said: "Behold what disobedience to, and defiance of, the will of God leads to."

There was much debate as to the fate of the prisoners. According to Arab custom they could have been dispatched immediately, but the Prophet determined otherwise. It was decided that those who could offer suitable ransom would be released on payment of the ransom, and those who could not offer ransom would be released as an act of grace. The ransom of such of the prisoners as were literate was fixed at teaching ten Muslim boys to read and write.

When the news of the catastrophe reached Mecca, there was mourning in every house. But all customary lamentations and other expressions and exhibitions of grief were forbidden by the Elders till the Meccans had had time to reorganize their forces and to avenge the disastrous defeat.

On returning to Medina, the Prophet resumed his main task of instructing the Muslims in the tenets, doctrines, and commandments of the faith, and in organizing them into a society such as Islam was designed to establish. All this had to be carried on under the constant threat of attack and aggression. The Prophet was aware, and indeed the Meccans fleeing from the battle of Badr had announced, that they would soon return to avenge their defeat. In Mecca, preparations toward that end proceeded briskly. Among other measures it was resolved that all profits derived from commercial ventures should be paid into a war fund, to be used for equipping an army strong enough to march against Medina. In a year's time the Meccans were ready, and a well-armed force, three thousand strong, took the road to Medina.

When the news reached the Prophet, he held a council to determine how this new threat should be met. He had had a dream, part of which he interpreted as meaning that it would be better for them to stay in Medina and await the enemy's attack. However, the younger men, particularly those who had not taken part in the previous battle, were eager to meet the foe before they could enter the town. Finding that a majority of those present were in favor of meeting the enemy outside Medina, the Prophet adopted their suggestion and marched out of the town at the head of approximately one thousand men.

The Muslims took up their position at the foot of a range of hills a few miles east of Medina. The Meccan army coming up from the south had veered to the east, intending to attack the town from that direction. The Prophet discovered that a certain number of Jews from Medina had also joined his following, and asked them to go back, saying that they had no obligation in respect of the defense of Medina that involved fighting outside the town. Abdullah bin Ubayy took umbrage at this, and announcing that the Muslims were no match for the force the Meccans had brought up, withdrew with three hundred of his supporters, leaving seven hundred men at the Prophet's disposal. Of these, the Prophet posted fifty to guard a gap in the range of hills at the rear, with instructions that they were not to leave their post until ordered to do so.

The disparity between the opposing forces was even more striking now than it had been the previous year. Against three thousand well-armed Meccan warriors, seven hundred of whom were in armor and two hundred mounted on horses, there were only six hundred and fifty Muslims (excluding those guarding the pass at the rear), of whom only one hundred were in armor, and they had only two horses. Yet, when battle was joined, the Meccans were soon put to flight. Seeing this, the men guarding

the pass became eager to join in the pursuit, and despite the remonstrances of their captain, the majority of them left their post, contrary to their instructions. One of the Meccan commanders, Khalid, drew the attention of another commander, 'Amr, to the sparely guarded pass, and the two of them, having collected a number of their followers, veered round behind the hill, slew the remaining men at their post, and fell upon the rearguard of the Muslims, by now scattered over the field, some in pursuit of the Meccans and others withdrawing from the battle under the impression that no further fighting was called for. Hearing the cries of their fellow fighters who had attacked the Muslims from the rear, the fleeing Meccans in front rallied and returned to the fray. In a moment all was confusion, and the Prophet, the target of the Meccan attack, was left with only a handful of Muslims to guard him. Most of these were killed by the arrows that rained down thick and fast upon them. Even as this took place, the Prophet prayed for his enemies: "Lord, grant guidance to my people, for they know not what they do." Hardly had he uttered the prayer when he himself was hit in the cheek by a stone that drove two of the rings of his helmet into the flesh. He fell down, unconscious, among the heap of Muslim dead, others falling on top of him.

The Meccans, thinking that the Prophet had been killed and that their main purpose had been achieved, withdrew from the field, content with the victory that they believed to be theirs. The scattered Muslims gathered round the spot where the Prophet had fallen, and finding him still alive though unconscious, raised him up. One of them pulled out with his teeth the rings of the Prophet's helmet which were embedded in his cheek, losing two of his teeth in the effort. The Muslims were heartened. Despite the losses and the reverse they had suffered, they were happy that the enemy had retired without having achieved his main purpose.

Various incidents during the battle of Uhud, named from one of the hills at the foot of which it was waged, confirmed the interpretation which the Prophet had put on his dream. It was realized by all that the Prophet's judgment had been correct, and that the complete victory which the Muslims had achieved in the early part of the day had almost been converted into defeat by disregard of the Prophet's instructions to the fifty men who had been assigned to guard the pass at the rear (3:153-155).

The women and children remaining in Medina during the battle were sorely grieved by reports that the Muslims had been defeated and the Prophet killed. Many of them streamed out of the town in the direction of Uhud, but when they were reassured that the Prophet was alive, all other considerations gave way to joy and relief. If the Prophet was safe, all had been gained and nothing lost. However, to the disaffected among both the Jews and the weaker Muslims in Medina, the course of the battle gave great encouragement. The Meccans, on their side, who had begun to suspect before retiring from the field of battle that the Prophet was alive, renewed their efforts at inciting the tribes in the central and southern parts of the peninsula against the Muslims.

In Medina the behavior of two of the Jewish tribes became increasingly arrogant and mischievous. As they had become a serious menace to the security of the town, they had to be expelled from it eventually. One tribe settled in Syria; the other, partly in Syria and partly in Khaibar, a Jewish stronghold to the north of Medina. Thus Khaibar also became a center of anti-Muslim intrigue, and the Jews of Khaibar in concert with the Meccans started a campaign directed mainly toward inciting the northern tribes against the Muslims,

In the meantime, Muslim society was rapidly taking shape and the foundation was being laid for the social and economic

organization of the Muslims. The commandment prohibiting the use of liquor and indulgence in gambling was revealed about this time, and was instantly and eagerly put into effect by the people, many of whom had been addicted to these vices all their lives (2:220; 5:91-92).

Shortly after the battle of Uhud, the Meccans were afflicted with a severe famine. When the Prophet learned of their distress, he raised a relief fund and sent it to Mecca. But this gracious and generous gesture of goodwill did not soften the implacable hostility of the Meccans. Their persistent incitement of the tribes against the Muslims soon began to bear fruit.

To the other devices employed by the enemies of Islam, treachery was now added. Two tribes, one after the other, pretended interest in, and sympathy toward, the new faith, and begged the Prophet to send them persons who could instruct them in its tenets and practices. To the first tribe, the Prophet sent ten selected instructors, who were treacherously and cruelly murdered. When the request for instruction came from the second tribe, the Prophet hesitated to comply, but yielded on a guarantee being furnished by one of the tribal chiefs. He sent seventy instructors, each having learned by heart the Quran, so far as it had then been revealed. They met with a similar fate.

This and other incidents convinced the Prophet that if peace were ever to be established and freedom of conscience were to be won for all, he would have to take more active steps than had hitherto been possible, to secure law and order and the observance of treaties and agreements. Henceforth, trying to stem the evil at its source, he would lead an expedition whenever he received intimation that hostile forces were gathering for an attack against him. He moved so rapidly in each case that he took his opponents by surprise, and on several occasions their designs were frustrated and peace was restored,

even though only temporarily and precariously, without recourse to fighting. When fighting did have to be resorted to, the issue was determined without serious loss of life. All that the Prophet asked was that his opponents lay down their arms and bind themselves to keep the peace.

This made the Meccans and their Jewish allies more desperate, and they redoubled their efforts to put an end to the Prophet and all that he stood for. By the fifth year after the Emigration, about two years after the battle of Uhud, they succeeded in arousing general hostility against the Muslims throughout Arabia, and laid most of the tribes under contribution to raise an army against the Muslims. This army, known as the Confederates, was estimated at eighteen to twenty thousand men. Their preparations were on a proportionate scale. They advanced in all their might against Medina, confident that this time there could be no escape for the Muslims.

When the Prophet was apprised of this, he held a council, as was his wont. This time there was no question of the Muslims being able to offer resistance outside Medina. They had to defend the town as best they could with such means as came to hand. Among the Prophet's companions at the time was Salman, an Iranian. Asked by the Prophet what Iranians would do in a similar situation, Salman replied that a township in the position of Medina would defend itself from behind a trench. The Prophet, approving of this suggestion, ordered a deep and wide trench to be dug on the side of Medina which was open to the plain, and thus was the most probable side for attack. On the other sides some security was offered by a range of hills, by the strongholds of the remaining Jewish tribe, and by stone houses and groves which lay thickly together. The Jewish tribe was in alliance with the Muslims and was bound by the terms of the Charter of Medina to co-operate in the defense of the town.

The Muslim population of Medina at that time comprised approximately three thousand males of all ages. With the exception of infants and very small children, they all flocked to the lines marked out for the digging of the trench and were divided into groups for digging and clearing the trench in sections. Even the women co-operated and helped relieve the men of such tasks as they could suitably perform. The total length of the trench was about a mile. It was scarcely ready before the Confederate army arrived in front of Medina. They were amazed to find their entry into the town barred by the trench, which was for them a new spectacle.

The Meccans made camp short of the trench and a state of siege began. Continuous attempts to cross the trench were repulsed. The fighting was not severe and there was little loss of life, though the strain on the Muslims was heavy and sustained. The Prophet had ordered the women and children under fifteen years of age away from the trench. This left him with about twelve hundred men to guard the trench and to oppose the entry of the Confederates into the town. The Muslims' desperate resistance was based on the realization that once the enemy gained a footing on their side of the trench it would mean the end of everything; neither man, woman, nor child would be spared and the Muslim quarters of Medina would be utterly destroyed.

The Confederates, finding the trench a formidable obstacle to their advance into the totem, began to consider other means of gaining their objective. Through Huyai bin Akhtab, chief of one of the Jewish tribes which had been expelled from Medina, they tried to win over to their side the remaining Jewish tribe in Medina. At first their approaches were repulsed, but in the end Huyai succeeded in convincing the Jewish leaders that this time there was no escape for the Muslims and that it would be wise

and prudent for the Jews to cast in their lot with the Confederates. It was agreed that as soon as the Confederates were able to force a passage across the trench, the Jews would rise and attack the Muslim quarters, so that the Muslims would be caught between the Confederates in front and the Jews in the rear.

Relying on the loyalty of the Jews and their duty in respect of the defense of Medina, the Prophet had posted no forces for the purpose of guarding the Muslim quarters of the town, and had left only a handful of watchmen to supervise the security of the women and children. When it became known to the Prophet that the Confederates had won over the Jews to their side, he assigned two bodies of men, three hundred and two hundred strong respectively, to the Muslim quarters of the town to take measures for their defense against the Jews should they attempt an attack. This reduced the forces at his disposal at the trench facing the Confederate army to seven hundred and fifty men. Again, the disparity in numbers and in every other respect between the opposing forces was not only striking but pitiful.

The Confederate army now pressed their attack across the trench, and there was continuous and desperate fighting. The plight of the Muslims is graphically described in the Quran. (33:11-24)

During one of the attacks, when a party of the Confederates had crossed the trench and were repulsed, a noted tribal chief was left dead on the Muslim side. His people, fearing that the Muslims would mutilate his dead body, as would have been their own procedure, offered a sum of ten thousand dirhems for the recovery of his body. They did not know that the Prophet had abolished all barbarous customs and that their fears were unfounded. When their offer was conveyed to the Prophet he

declined to receive any payment, saying, "A corpse has no value for us. They can remove it whenever they like."

Before the day decided upon for the joint assault by the Confederates and the Jews, relief came from an unexpected source: the weather. It was a stormy and turbulent night. The fierce wind caused great confusion in the Confederate camp. Further consternation arose when one of the tribal chiefs observed that the fire in front of his tent had gone out; according to Arab superstition, this portended death or defeat for him in the next day's fighting. To avoid this, the chief told his people to strike camp so that they could withdraw quietly into the desert for a day or two. This move was interpreted by both Jew and Confederate as a device to secure safety against a feared night sortie by the Muslims. The alarm spread and there was general panic. Tents were hastily pulled down, and a disorderly retreat ensued. When morning came, the whole plain in front of the trench was empty. There was no trace of the Confederate forces (33:10)

The Muslims, who had been suffering extremes of privation and fatigue, and had considered themselves at the end of their tether, rejoiced greatly at this sudden deliverance. But respite was not yet to be. The treachery of the Jewish tribe in Medina had to be dealt with. The Prophet told his men to be ready to march against the Jewish strongholds, and he sent his cousin, Ali, to demand from the Jews an explanation of their conduct. Far from furnishing any explanation or offering any excuse, the Jews behaved most arrogantly toward Ali, repudiated their covenant, and uttered vile abuse of the Prophet and his family. Manning their fortified strongholds, they dared the Muslims to do their worst. Ali, returning to the Muslim quarters, was met by the Prophet, who was advancing toward the Jewish sector with his men. When Ali described the situation to the Prophet and

begged him not to proceed farther himself, but to entrust the mission to somebody else, the Prophet said: "Ali, are you afraid that I might hear abuse from our opponents? Moses was of their own kith and kin, and they treated him far worse than they have treated me. I can expect nothing better at their hands."

The Jewish strongholds were surrounded by the Prophet's forces, and the Jews soon found that they had no alternative but to surrender. Instead of throwing themselves on the Prophet's mercy, however, they asked for arbitration by Saad bin Muaz, the chief of the Aug, who had been their ally before the Emigration. Saad had been wounded during the battle of the Trench, and was being tended in the mosque at Medina. Brought before the Prophet and the leaders of the Jewish tribe, Saad was informed why his presence was desired. After making sure that his decision would be accepted by both sides and would be carried out, Saad pronounced sentence in accordance with the Jewish law applicable in such a case (Deut. 20:10-18)

It was a terrible sentence: death to all males, and all property to be taken as booty. But the Jews had brought it upon themselves, first by their treachery, next by their resistance to the Muslims after they had been caught in their treachery, and finally by preferring the judgment of Saad, who had been their ally, rather than throwing themselves upon the well-known and oft-experienced mercy of the Prophet. The sentence was carried out, but the Prophet invited intercession on behalf of the condemned, and in response to every plea of intercession, he remitted the sentence. When it was pointed out to him that he was bound to carry out Saad's decision and that there was no room for either intercession or mercy, he replied that he was bound by the award, but as head of state he nevertheless possessed the prerogative of mercy, which he could exercise freely. Some of the Jews who had dissociated themselves from their people

before the matter was submitted to the arbitration of Saad were permitted to go free, without need for intercession.

Despite the desperate nature of the encounters that had taken place in the course of the siege of Medina by the Confederates and the continuous and heavy strain which the situation had imposed upon the Muslims during the terrible three weeks that it endured, there was little loss of life in battle on either side. The Prophet was convinced that the siege of Medina had been the high-water mark of the Meccan effort to subdue the city by force. There was no respite in the intensity of Meccan hostility toward the Prophet and the faith, but the Meccans were beginning to entertain doubts whether further efforts to destroy the Muslims and their faith by the use of aggressive force would meet with success. They were, however, determined not to entertain any suggestion of what in terms of today might be described as peaceful coexistence. Every type of harassment, including plunder and murder, was resorted to, and the incitement of the tribes throughout Arabia against the Muslims was actively pursued, both by the Meccans and by the Jews. This left the Prophet no choice but to maintain the utmost vigilance and to be always ready to lead in person or to dispatch forces wherever preparations for active assault might be under way.

A state of alarums and excursions obtained in Medina and everybody was kept on the qui vive. A companion of the Prophet subsequently said: "In those days we could only obtain snatches of sleep at fitful intervals and had to keep our arms close by us, and we often prayed, 'O Lord, wilt Thou, by Thy Grace vouchsafe us such security that we may go to sleep at night without any fear in our hearts save only the fear of Thy Majesty.'"

The Concluding Years

In the sixth year after the emigration, the Prophet saw in a vision that he was performing the circuit of the Ka'aba with a party of Muslims (48:28). Relating this vision to his companions, he asked them to prepare for a journey to Mecca for the purpose of performing the circuit. This was a privilege which could be claimed by anyone, and it was not permissible to hinder its exercise. The Prophet announced that the only purpose of his party, which numbered fifteen hundred men, was to perform the circuit in peace and then to return to Medina. He had no hostile intent against anybody. The Meccans decided not to permit him and his party to enter Mecca for any purpose whatever, and sent out a strong force to the north to intercept him. The Prophet, approaching Mecca from the west, refrained from entering the limits of the Sanctuary, * and made camp a few miles outside these limits. He announced that he would accept any conditions the Meccans might choose to impose upon his party during the period they would be in Mecca, so only that they might perform their acts of worship in peace. (The Sanctuary, an area encompassing the Ka'aba and its precincts and extending for twenty miles in each direction from the limits of Mecca, is a region in which no fighting is permitted. Pillars mark the boundaries of the Sanctuary)

Soon an envoy arrived from the city and made it clear that the chiefs would on no account permit the Muslims to enter Mecca, at least not that year, for this would be interpreted as a triumph for the Prophet and a humiliation for the Meccans. Continuing his efforts to persuade the Meccans to let his party perform an act of worship which was the undoubted right of every Arab, the Prophet sent one of his principal companions, Uthman, into Mecca to talk to the chiefs, but to no purpose. Eventually, the Meccans did propose certain conditions, all of which the Prophet

accepted, and a treaty, known as the Treaty of Hudaibiyya (after the place where the Prophet was then encamped), was drawn up. The treaty specified that hostilities be suspended for ten years; that any tribe choosing to do so could enter into treaty relations with the Muslims or the Meccans; that both sides were under obligation to respect these treaties; that any Meccan young man who left the town without the permission of his father or guardian and joined the Prophet would be returned to Mecca, but that any Muslim who left the Prophet and went over to the Meccans would not be returned to the Muslims; that the Prophet and his party would return to Medina, but would be permitted to perform the circuit the following year and could stay in Mecca for that purpose for three days; that they would not enter Mecca with any arms other than sheathed swords; that the Meccans would vacate the town during that period in order to eliminate all risk of clash.

The Muslims felt that the terms of the treaty were not only onerous and one-sided, but humiliating. The Prophet, however, explained that unequal as it was, it did secure great benefits, the principal ones being that the Meccans had recognized the Muslims as a people with whom they could enter into treaty relations, and that they had agreed to a ten-year truce period. During that time Islam could be freely preached, and, he added, perhaps peaceful conditions would be established throughout Arabia before the truce period ended. He also stressed that the terms of the treaty were not contrary to his vision; in fact, they opened a way for its fulfillment, inasmuch as the performance of the circuit of the Ka'aba the following year was now assured. Concerning the one-sided arrangement with regard to the return of Meccan young men who might accept Islam, the Prophet pointed out that any person whose heart was illumined by faith would continue to spread the light wherever he was,

while Muslims had no use for anybody who chose to repudiate his faith and desert them.

While the Prophet and his party were on their way back to Medina from Hudaibiyya, the Prophet received a revelation which described the peace treaty as a great victory (48:2).

Peace having been secured, with every chance of its being made permanent before the treaty lapsed, the Prophet was now able to turn, without distracting diversions, to the carrying forward of his principal mission. He addressed letters to the various rulers holding sway over territories which were part of, or contiguous to, the Arabian peninsula, inviting them to accept Islam. Among those to whom these letters were sent were the Cheif of Bahrain, the Emperor of Iran, the Byzantine Emperor, his Viceroy in Egypt, and the Emperor of Ethiopia. The Chief of Bahrain and many of his people accepted Islam. The Iranian Emperor treated the Prophet's communication with haughty contempt, not only tearing it up, but sending directions to his Viceroy in Yemen to have the Prophet arrested. The Byzantine Emperor, to whom the letter was delivered, took some interest in its contents and even made inquiries concerning the Prophet. His Viceroy in Egypt treated the letter with great veneration and sent back presents to the Prophet. The Emperor of Ethiopia accepted the Prophet's invitation and declared himself a Muslim.

The Jews who had been expelled from Medina and were settled in Khaibar, a short distance to the north, found that their incitement of Arab tribes against the Prophet had, in view of the Treaty of Hudaibiyya, little chance of success; therefore, they turned their attention to the Christian and pagan tribes in the north, who were under the protection of the *Byzantine Emperor*, and *they also* started intriguing with the Jews settled in Iraq and with the Iranian Emperor. Thus, though the Prophet and the Muslims might have peace in south and central Arabia,

they were to be exposed to fresh and even *greater dangers* from the north and northeast. If the whole of that region were not to flare up at once against the Muslims, the least that was necessary was to remove the Jews from Khaibar because the place served as a dangerous spying post as well as a center of disaffection and incitement close to Medina. The Prophet led a force against Khaibar and called upon the Jews to surrender, but, relying on the strength of their fortifications, they chose to fight. After a siege lasting some days they surrendered, but were allowed to depart unharmed on condition that they settle in some place far from Medina.

When the time came, the Prophet and two thousand followers performed the circuit of the Ka'aba-and did so with scrupulous *observance* of the conditions which had been laid down the previous year in the Treaty of Hudaibiyya. Shortly after, Khalid and 'Amr, two of the Meccan generals who had distinguished themselves in the battle of Uhud, accepted Islam and joined the Muslims.

On return from Mecca, the Prophet received intelligence that Christian tribes on the Syrian border, instigated by the Jaws and pagan Arabs, were making preparations for an attack upon Medina. He dispatched a party of fifteen to make a reconnaissance. They found an army massing on the Syrian border, and hoping that an exposition of the principles of Islam might serve to reassure the Christian tribes of Syria and to preserve peace, they attempted to establish contact with these hostile forces. They were, however, attacked with arrows, and were all killed.

Upon receipt of this news, the Prophet planned an expedition against Syria, but receiving intimation that the forces which had been concentrating on the border had dispersed, he abandoned the project. Instead, he addressed a letter to the Byzantine

Emperor through the chief of the Ghassan tribe, who exercised authority in the name of Byzantium, in which he protested against the military preparations which had been observed on the Syrian border and the unjust killing of the party of fifteen whom he had sent to report on the border situation. His envoy was arrested by the Ghassan chief and was put to death. When this came to the Prophet's knowledge, he dispatched a force of three thousand to Syria under the command of Zaid, his freedman.

The Prophet, together with some of his companions, traveled some distance out of Medina with these forces, to speed them on their way, and when parting with them he reminded them that they should consider themselves all the time in the presence of God, and that the commanders should deal justly with those over whom they had been placed in authority. They should *fight* in the cause of God courageously, but humanely. They should not molest priests and monks and those who occupied themselves with the remembrance of God in their houses of worship, nor should they kill women or children or old people or those who were in any manner afflicted and were not able to fight. Nor should they cut down any tree or pull down any building.

When these forces arrived at the Syrian border, they found that the Emperor himself had taken the field with one hundred thousand of his own soldiers, and a like number recruited from the focal Christian tribes. A discussion arose among the Muslims whether they should go forward to encounter this huge force, or should return to Medina and report the situation, or should send to Medina for instructions. It was decided to march forward, and the battle was fought at a place called Muta. The fighting was fierce and desperate and first Zaid, and after him Jafar, a cousin of the Prophet, and then Abdullah, each of whom had been named commander by the Prophet in that order, were killed.

Then Khalid took over the command and continued the fight till dark. The next day he changed the disposition of his small force; those on the right were posted on the left and those in the rear were brought to the front. This created the impression among the enemy that the Muslims had received reinforcements during the night. There was desperate fighting throughout the day, and at nightfall the Byzantine forces withdrew from the field. Khalid returned to Medina with the remnant of the Muslim force.

The following year the Meccan's committed a flagrant breach of the Treaty of Hudaibiyya. Without warning or cause, they sent a force with the Banu Bakr tribe, with whom they were in alliance, to attack the Khuza'a, a tribe in alliance with the Muslims, and killed many of their people. The Khuza'a immediately dispatched a party of forty fast riders to Medina to give the Prophet intimation of this treacherous attack and to call upon him to redress the breach of the treaty. The Meccans, perturbed at this piece of news, sent Abu Sufyan to Medina to patch up the matter. Nobody there paid any attention to him and he returned to Mecca, where he reported that though he had not succeeded in securing a new agreement, neither had he observed any warlike preparations in Medina. Abu Sufyan and the Meccans were soon undeceived, however, and were taken completely by surprise when they found the Prophet only a day's march from Mecca at the head of a force of ten thousand, composed partly of Muslims from Medina, but mainly of Muslims from among the tribes in alliance with the Prophet.

The Meccans, feeling helpless, sent Abu Sufyan and two others to the Prophet's camp to see whether anything could be done to save the situation. They found the Prophet much distressed over the wanton breach of the treaty by the Meccans and the slaughter among the Khuza'a that they and their allies had perpetrated. Abu Sufyan, recalling all that the Meccans had

done to and attempted against, the Prophet and the Muslims, feared the worst. He passed a night in the Prophet's camp and was deeply impressed by the love and devotion which the Muslims entertained for the Prophet. Realizing that there was no way of escape for the Meccans, he asked the Prophet whether the Meccans could have peace if they did not draw the sword. The Prophet answered in the affirmative and announced a series of measures which would secure a peaceful entry of his followers into Mecca and obviate the possibility of a clash. These measures were widely proclaimed in Mecca and the Muslim forces marched in, the Prophet himself bringing up the rear. At one point the party led by Khalid was attacked by the Meccans and there was a clash resulting in the death of about a dozen men. News of this was brought quickly to the Prophet, and he immediately issued orders which stopped further bloodshed.

The Prophet proceeded to the Ka'aba, and himself smashed one by one the idols that had been installed therein. As each idol fell, he recited the verse: "Truth has come and falsehood has vanished away. Falsehood does indeed vanish fast" (I7:82). Thus was the Ka'aba restored to its true purpose, the worship of the One God, as was intended by Abraham.

Having performed these immediate and necessary tasks, and having prayed inside and outside the Ka'aba in thankfulness to God for all His favors, the Prophet sent for the leaders of the Qureish and asked them how he should deal with them. They replied that they fully merited whatever punishment he might choose to inflict upon them, but that they knew he was a generous brother and would deal with them as such. The Prophet pronounced judgment in the words addressed by the Prophet Joseph to his brethren: "No retribution shall be exacted from you this day" (12:93)

All the scorn and ridicule poured on him by the Meccans; their implacable hatred and enmity; the long years of bitter, cruel, and sustained persecution; all the fighting, the hardship and suffering; the loss of dear and devoted companions-all, all was in the moment of triumph laid aside, banished from the mind and forgiven in the name of the Lord on High, the Gracious, the Merciful, the Creator and Master of all. God's glorious command was carried out to the uttermost: "Good and evil are not alike. Repel evil with that which is best and lo, he between whom and thyself was enmity will become as though he were a warm friend. But none attains to it save those who are steadfast, and none attains to it save those who possess abundant good" (41:35-36). The gates of love and mercy were opened wide. Bitter enemies of the morning became warm friends by nightfall. Some hearts were still sullen; the humiliation, though softened by magnanimity, was hard to endure, but even these could not long withstand the healing effect of the balm so generously and so beneficently applied by the Prophet. History furnishes no parallel instance of such complete forgiveness, such utter beneficence, on so large a scale.

A dozen individuals had been marked down for punitive action on account of the atrocities of which they, individually, had been guilty. One of them was Hindah, the wife of Abu Sufyan, who had constantly incited the Meccans against the Muslims. After the battle of Uhud she had cut out the heart of the Prophet's uncle, Hamza killed in battle, and had chewed it up. Even on the day that Mecca opened its gates to the Muslims, she was so outraged when her husband conveyed to her news of the surrender that she took hold of his beard and gave him a violent shaking, calling upon the Meccans to come and kill him for his treachery in having agreed to the surrender instead of taking up arms against the Muslims. However, when she realized that the situation was hopeless, she joined a group of women who went to the Prophet

to make their submission. During their talk with the Prophet, Hindah, veiled, intervened several times with pert remarks. The Prophet, thinking the voice was familiar, inquired: "Is that Hindah?" Hindah replied: "Yes, but Messenger of Allah, you cannot proceed against me now for I am a professing Muslim." The Prophet smiled and said: "Of course, you are free."

Another Meccan of the same type was Habbar, who had cut the girth of the camel which carried the Prophet's daughter Zainab as she was about to proceed to Medina during the Emigration. Habbar's action caused Zainab to fall from the camel. She suffered a miscarriage, which later resulted in her death. Habbar also appeared before the Prophet, and professing sorrow for his misconduct begged forgiveness, intimating that he had accepted Islam. In his case also the Prophet said: "You may go free. I can take no action against you now."

It will be recalled that Abu Jahl, the commander of the Meccan army killed during the battle of Badr, had been the Prophet's bitterest enemy in Mecca. His son, Ikramah, was one of the Meccan commanders in the battle of Uhud who had spotted the inadequately guarded rear pass and had led the attack which ended in near disaster for the Muslims.

When Mecca fell, Ikramah left the town and proceeded to the coast, intending to cross over to Ethiopia, being convinced that he could have no security in Mecca or anywhere near it. His wife approached the Prophet and asked whether Ikramah could return to Mecca while professing his idolatrous beliefs. The Prophet replied that faith was a matter of conscience and conscience was free. If Ikramah returned to Mecca he would not be molested, and could live there in security professing whatever he chose to believe in. On this assurance she followed Ikramah and persuaded him to return to Mecca. On arrival there, he repaired to the Prophet and received the assurance

which the Prophet had already given to his wife. Thereupon he announced his acceptance of Islam, and the Prophet asked him if there were anything he wished for. Ikramah replied that he could wish for no greater bounty than God had already bestowed upon him in opening his heart to the acceptance of Islam, but he did desire that the Prophet should pray God to forgive him all the enmity that he had borne toward the Prophet and the Muslims.

The Prophet prayed accordingly and then bestowed his own cloak on Ikramah, saying: "He who comes to me believing in God can claim my house as his." Ikramah proved himself a sincere and zealous believer and set the seal on his faith by laying down his life in defense of it on one of the Syrian battlefields some years later.

The Prophet, having returned to Mecca, as had been foretold before the Emigration (28:86), felt that the people of Medina might wonder whether he intended to take up his residence there. He called their leaders and told them that he had no such intention. Mecca was very dear to him, but having cast in his lot with the people of Medina, who had stood by him when he was rejected by the Meccans and had to leave Mecca, he would not now leave them for Mecca. They were delighted to hear this and felt as if he had bestowed the world's abundance upon them.

Mecca had fallen, but this did not bring peace. The Prophet's march against Mecca had been so sudden that the first intimation of it that reached the tribes of central and southern Arabia was the fall of the town. They were greatly agitated by the news, and felt that the time had come for the last desperate effort to be put forth against Islam. Within a month of the fall of Mecca and while the Prophet was still in the town, he had to go forth to face an army of seventy thousand men at Hunain. On this occasion a force of two thousand Meccans, many of whom had not

yet professed Islam, had also joined him, for though not Muslims they had accepted the Prophet's authority.

The battle, even before it was fairly joined, took an adverse course, and the Muslim forces were thrown into utter confusion. The Prophet was left with only twelve companions, but he spurred his mule forward, saying: "I am a true Prophet and no impostor. I am the grandson of Abdul Muttalib." At the same time he asked his uncle, Abbas, who was near him, to stand on an eminence and call out to the Emigrants and the Helpers that the Prophet of God summoned them. This helped rally the Muslim forces and the battle that ensued ended in complete victory (9:25-26). On this occasion Abu Sufyan, a recent and reluctant convert, gave proof of his rapid inner conviction by holding fast to the stirrup of the Prophet and exposing himself to extreme danger. The enemy abandoned great booty on the field of battle and many prisoners were taken, which brought in large sums in ransom. Instead of distributing all this among the Muslim forces, according to custom, the Prophet chose to distribute it among the people of Mecca and those living in the neighborhood of Mecca, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. This occasioned some disappointment among sections of the Muslim army, but most of them reconciled themselves to the Prophet's decision and accepted it cheerfully.

The result of the battle of Hunain seemed to assure peace in the peninsula proper, but when the Prophet returned to Medina he found that owing mainly to the activities of some of the disaffected elements, the leading figure among whom was Abu 'Amir of the Khazraj, there was serious apprehension of an attack from the north. Abu 'Amir and his associates had been active in creating tension between the Muslims and the Christian tribes of Syria. They went to and fro spreading rumors on each side that the other was preparing to attack. These rumors became so

persistent that the Prophet considered it necessary to lead in person an army against Syria. In Medina itself the disaffected element tried to scare the Muslims by painting dreadful pictures of the sufferings and destruction that surely awaited any force that might dare to challenge the great might of Byzantium, while yet hoping that the Prophet would go north at the head of a group so small and weak that none of them would be suffered to return. Medina was at that time in the grip of a famine and the season was at its hottest, so that marching through the desert involved terrible suffering. Some of the desert Arabs sought to make excuses why they could not join the expedition. Others who were eager to join could not find mounts, nor even shoes to protect their feet against the burning sands of the desert (9:90-96) Nevertheless, a force was got ready, and marched to the border of Syria. Arriving there, the Prophet dispatched parties in different directions to report on the situation. These returned and reported that they had not observed any concentrations anywhere. Being assured that in fact no preparations were going forward in Syria for an attack against the Muslims, the Prophet decided to return to Medina, stopping only for a few days near the border to conclude peace treaties with some of the tribes on the border. There was no fighting at all. The expedition involved the Prophet's absence from Medina for about two and one-half months.

Delegations now poured in from all parts of Arabia offering their submission and announcing their acceptance of Islam. In a short time the whole of Arabia adhered to the Pax Islamica.

In the ninth year after the Emigration, the Prophet went on pilgrimage to Mecca. On the day of the pilgrimage he received the revelation: "This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favor unto you and have chosen for you Islam as your faith" (5:4).

The Prophet, as was his wont, announced the revelation and delivered an address-known as the Farewell Address-to the huge assemblage in the valley of Arafat outside Mecca. He started by saying that he did not know whether he would be able to meet them again on the occasion of the pilgrimage, and he asked them to lend an attentive ear to what he had to say. He went on to admonish them to order their lives in accordance with the commandments of God; to take particular care that no trespass was committed against any person in respect of his life, property, or honor; to treat women with due regard and consideration, fully observing their rights, which corresponded to the rights that the men had. He expressed solicitude for the welfare of prisoners of war, some of whom they still had among them, saying that they must be accorded the same treatment as members of the captors' own families; he stressed that all human beings were equal, whatever their individual status, and that no one could claim any privilege or superiority against any other.

He ended by asking them to bear witness to the Unity of God, and to affirm the principal articles of faith. He then inquired whether he had conveyed God's message to them, and had discharged his trust. There was a deafening response that he had. He asked those present to convey what he had said to those who were not present on the occasion.

The pilgrimage over, the Prophet returned to Medina and occupied every available moment in expounding and teaching the principles of Islam and the philosophy that lay behind them and in urging the Muslims to order their lives accordingly.

One day he announced that he had received the revelation: "In the name of Allah, Ever Gracious, Most Merciful. The help of Allah having come, and the Victory, and thou having witnessed men entering the religion of Allah in troops, hymn the praises of

thy Lord, and seek His protection against their weaknesses. Surely He is Oft-Returning with compassion” (110:2-4)

Abu Bakr concluded from this that as the Prophet’s mission had been fulfilled, he would not be spared to them for long, and he was overcome by emotion. The Prophet, observing this, remarked: “If it were permissible to love a human being with the heart’s full devotion, I would have so loved Abu Bakr, but such love is only for God,” and he went on to add that all doors that opened into the mosque should be closed except Abu Bakr’s.

Soon the Prophet fell ill. For some days he continued to go to the mosque and lead the Prayers, but then he became too weak to do this. He directed Abu Bakr to lead the Prayers. One day he told those present that if there were anyone whom he might have injured by mistake or unwittingly, that person should come forward now so that he might make suitable amends, as he did not wish to appear before his Maker with any obligation not discharged. One of them came forth. He reminded the Prophet of an inconvenience, even though slight, which he had once suffered at the Prophet’s hands. It was merely that the Prophet’s elbow had by chance once grazed his back. “Come then,” the Prophet offered, “and stick your elbow into my back.” “But, oh Messenger of Allah, my back was bare while yours is covered.” The Prophet offered to bare his back, and did so. ‘the man approached, and with great tenderness kissed the Prophet’s back. It was his way of demonstrating his deep love for the Prophet.

The end approached. The Prophet expressed great anxiety lest after his death his followers might be tempted to have recourse to practices which might assign him a position above that of a human being, as had been done in the case of some other prophets by their followers. He impressed repeatedly upon those who visited him that he was but a human being to whom God had

vouchsafed revelation for the guidance of mankind. He breathed his last with the words: "To the Companion on High, to the Companion on High."

The Prophet's death (A.D, 632) struck the Muslims as a fearful calamity, and many of his intimate companions were crushed with grief. Umar drew his sword and said he would cut off the head of any who dared to assert that the Prophet was dead; he could not die. Abu Bakr arrived. Entering the chamber where the Prophet's body lay, he kissed it on the forehead and said: "God will not inflict two deaths upon thee," meaning that the death of the body was inevitable, but that God would preserve forever the Prophet's teaching concerning the Existence and Unity of God. He then came out and asked Umar to desist while he addressed the people briefly. He recited from the Quran: "Muhammad is but a Messenger. All Messengers have passed away before him. If then he die or be slain, will you turn back on your heels? He who turns back on his heels shall not harm Allah at all. Allah will certainly reward the grateful" (3:145) And he added: "Hearken: he who worshiped Muhammad should know that Muhammad is dead, but he who worships God should remember that God is Ever-Living and does not die."

This helped those present to balance their emotions, and to realize that though the parting was heartrending, God's will was supreme and must be accepted in a spirit of steadfastness,

The poet Hassan gave expression to his poignant grief at the death of the Prophet in Arabic verse:

Thou wert the pupil of my eye;
My eye is now sightless.
After thee I care not who dies;
I was fearful only of losing thee.

The Excellent Exemplar

Muhammad was a lawbearing prophet. The Quran says that he was not a Messenger who brought newfangled doctrines (46:10). There had been lawbearing prophets before him, for instance Moses, through whom God had proclaimed the advent of a lawbearing Prophet "like unto him" (Deut. 18:18). This means that Muhammad had been selected by God as a fit and appropriate channel for conveying the Divine law and guidance to mankind. His claim that he had been so selected implied that his personality had been molded to that end and that he illustrated conformity to that law and guidance in his own conduct. It is necessary, therefore, briefly to study his personality and character in order to see whether that implication was justified. What type of man was he? How did he deal with his fellow beings? How did he discharge his duty to God?

Though Muhammad lived in a region which had slight contacts with the rest of the world and at a time when the art of history was still in its infancy, he was a truly historical personality. He lived his life in the full light of day. Enough is known of his early life to enable us to form a fair idea of his qualities and character. After he received the Divine Call his every word, act, and gesture were observed, and a complete record of them has been preserved. It was necessary that that should be so, for otherwise not only would certainty and confidence be lacking, but his life could not furnish us with an example of what he taught.

Muhammad was a human being-no more, no less-and therefore he could serve as an example for mankind. He possessed and claimed no supernatural powers. He was subject to the same conditions and limitations as the rest of us. He suffered more than most and achieved outstanding success in his lifetime. His

life had many facets and passed through many phases. Like other men he was a son, a husband, and a father. He had been a servant employed by a master, a citizen subject to the authority of his town. God appointed him a teacher and a guide. He immediately became an object of scorn and ridicule and soon of bitter persecution. He was a loving and anxious shepherd of his little flock. Through bitter persecution and hard fighting, he gave proof of the highest courage, endurance, and perseverance.

During the last ten years of his life he was called upon to discharge the duties of chief executive and chief magistrate of a heterogeneous community, divided into sections in conflict with each other. He became the head of a state fraught with internal frictions and beset with external dangers of every description. In addition to the heavy duties and responsibilities pertaining to his Prophetic office, he was called upon to display qualities of administration and statesmanship which taxed him to the utmost.

He was a man of peace. The due discharge of the trust and responsibility which God had been pleased to place on him demanded the establishment and preservation of peace. His enemies would let him have no peace. They forced him to take up arms in defense of the most fundamental human right: freedom of conscience. He hated war and conflict, but when war was forced upon him he strove to render it humane. He abolished all savage and barbarous practices. He commanded in battle, but scrupulously refrained from personally shedding blood. His strategy was faultless and was always designed to reduce loss of life and human suffering to the minimum. Binding obligations and demands of justice imposed upon him the duty of avenging wrong and punishing evil in a harsh world, but his judgments were always tempered with mercy.

The Prophet was fair of feature and form. He was a model of health, strength, and manliness, withal gentle of heart, sensitive, full of sympathy, tender toward suffering of every description. He had been early commanded to “lower the wing of tenderness” toward those with him (26:216). This became his second nature. His habits and ways were simple; he was modest and humble. In his personal life he was austere, yet he was, like Abraham, appreciative of the “bounties of his Lord” (16:122).

The testimony of Khadija with regard to his character and qualities has been noted. Someone inquired from Ayesha, daughter of Abu Bakr, whom he married two years after the Emigration, how the Prophet occupied himself during the time that he was at home. She said that he helped in the performance of household duties, patched up his clothes, mended his shoes, and was a kindly and affectionate companion. She was asked for her estimate of his character. She answered: “His character was the Quran.”

During the period of persecution in Mecca he endured all without complaint and proved himself a good and law-abiding citizen. Yet he was never afraid and was not deterred from doing all that he considered was due from him. It has been mentioned that he had, in association with some others, undertaken the obligation to go to the assistance of any person who might have been wronged and to procure justice for him. He never failed or faltered in the discharge of that obligation, even after he himself became the object of persecution. On one occasion an outsider sought help from the Meccans in respect of the recovery of a sum of money owed to him by Abu Jahl. Those whom the man approached directed him cynically to the Prophet. The Prophet immediately accompanied him to Abu Jahl’s house, and knocked at his door. Abu Jahl, amazed to see Muhammad there, admitted the debt. The Prophet then asked him to discharge his obligation,

which he promptly did. When Abu Jahl later *appeared* among his fellows, they *jeered* at him and taunted him with having submitted *meekly* to Muhammad's demand. He said he had been so *awed* that he could not do otherwise.

Even during the Meccan period, the widow, the orphan, the needy, the wayfarer, the slave, and the distressed were the objects of the persecuted Prophet's special care and concern.

At Medina he continued his simple ways and austere habits. For days together his hearth remained unlit. He and his family subsisted on a *meager* diet of dates, or parched and ground barley. *Sometimes water* alone sufficed. He had but one change of clothes. His dwelling was of the simplest and barest. He slept on a *leather* sack filled with twigs and branches of *trees*. He never slept in a bed; never ate bread made out of ground flour; never ate his fill.

Indeed, his personal requirements were always kept at the barest minimum, and that minimum he *accepted and appreciated* as a generous Divine bounty. This was strikingly illustrated on the day Mecca surrendered and opened its gates to him. That was a day of great triumph. The Prophet busied himself with settling and supervising the orderly carrying through of the complicated and delicate operation, and when everything had been satisfactorily accomplished, he bethought himself of procuring some nourishment. He went to the house of his cousin, Umm-i-Hany, who was delighted to welcome him, but was distressed that she had nothing in the house which she could offer him except a piece of very stale bread, too hard to be swallowed. When she mentioned this to the Prophet, he smiled and said, "Surely, Umm-i-Hany, it can be softened by being soaked in water. And have you anything which could make it more palatable?" She replied, "There is a little of the dregs of vinegar left over from long ago." The Prophet said, "That would

be excellent.” He then proceeded to soak the piece of bread in water, and when it was softened, he ate it with the few drops of black vinegar, first pronouncing the name of God over the “meal” and rendering thanks to Him when he finished, as if it had been a banquet. He thanked his cousin and observed, “Umm-i-Hany, what a bounty bread and vinegar is.”

At night, between the prescribed services, he spent long hours in Prayer. He stood so long in Prayer that sometimes his feet became swollen. This once moved Ayesha to venture a mild protest. The Prophet said: “Ayesha, God has been so profuse in bestowing His bounties upon me that it behooves me to be the most grateful of His servants.”

The character of his domestic life may be gathered from one of his own well-known sayings: “The best among you is he who treats the members of his family best.”

He constantly exhorted his people toward moderation in all respects. Noticing that some were inclined to carry austerity to the extreme, and to occupy themselves so much with prayer and fasting that they were apt to neglect their normal obligations, and to injure their health, he admonished them thus: “I fear God more than any of you fear Him, yet I fast and I eat; I pray and I discharge all my obligations toward my family and my people. It is not right to carry any matter to the extreme. God loves best those acts of worship and piety which, though moderate, are carried out without being felt a burden. Having performed what is prescribed, pray and fast and worship God while you may do so cheerfully; stop when your spirit or your body begins to feel the strain.”

He did not disdain humor and with all his grave preoccupations did not altogether neglect the lighter side of life. On one occasion when he was sitting at home with Ayesha, an old woman

came to visit her. Thinking that it was a good opportunity to ask a favor of the Prophet, the visitor begged him to pray that she might be admitted to heaven when her time came to depart this life. The Prophet said: "There will be no old women in heaven." Distressed, the old lady began to bewail her fate. The Prophet hastened to explain that what he had meant was that there would be no question of age, of old or young in heaven; all would be alike. He comforted her till she was restored to cheerfulness. On one occasion he challenged Ayesha to a race, which she won. A year or two later he challenged her again and this time he won. He laughed, saying, "Ayesha, we have come out even."

Ayesha once confessed to him that she had suspected him of unfairness, but had soon found out that she was mistaken. He remarked, "Ayesha, there is a Satan inside every one of us, of whose promptings we should beware."

"Is there a Satan inside you also?" she rejoined.

"Yes," he replied, "but he has accepted submission."

One day he happened to pass near a date-palm garden where some people were grafting trees. He inquired what they were doing, and when they explained the process he asked them why they did not do it another way. The following year these people complained that they had adopted his suggestion, but that the trees had yielded less fruit. "But I had merely made an inquiry from you," he said. "You know more about these things than I do. You should have followed the method which experience had taught you was best."

He was often called upon to decide disputes and give judgment. He warned, however, that he had no means of discovering the truth except through what was stated before him. It was quite possible that one party to a dispute might succeed by plausible

arguments in persuading him that right was on his side, when in fact the other party was in the right, and that he might give judgment in favor of the first. Even so, a person in whose favor judgment was given must remember that he was answerable to God. The mere fact that he had obtained a judgment from the Prophet would not serve to absolve him if he were not in fact in the right.

The Prophet's clemency was well known. A poor man confessed to him publicly that he had been guilty of a certain offense. The Prophet imposed a mild penalty by way of a fine, which would be distributed in charity, but the man said he was unable to pay. In the meantime somebody brought a basket of dates to the Prophet to be distributed in charity. The Prophet bade the guilty man to take the dates and distribute them among the poor. Said the man: "Sir, I know of no one more deserving of charity than myself" The Prophet laughed and replied: "Well then, take them yourself and that will suffice as your penalty."

His treatment of Hindah, Habbar, and Ikramah after the fall of Mecca has been mentioned. An incident of a more personal nature is also worthy of recall. During the course of a journey his party rested among a grove of trees to avoid the noonday heat. The Prophet hung up his sword by the branch of a tree and lay down to rest under its shade. An enemy who had been on the lookout for an opportunity to kill him stole into the camp, and finding the Prophet sleeping unguarded, approached him secured his sword, and sat down on his chest. The Prophet woke up in surprise as the man, brandishing the sword, said: "Who can save thee now?" The Prophet gently uttered the single word, "Allah," moved away from under the man, raised himself and took hold of his assailant, wresting the sword from him. The position was now reversed.

"Who can save thee now?" inquired the Prophet.

"No one!" exclaimed the man in terror.

"Why do you not say 'Allah' ?" asked the Prophet as he released the man. When the man returned to his tribe he told them that he had encountered a man whose mercy and forgiveness were beyond belief. He then related what had occurred, and this led him and his tribe to accept Islam.

The Prophet had been sent as a manifestation of God's mercy to mankind (21:108). His mercy was all-embracing, without limit, and without discrimination. He was not niggardly about it, as lesser men might have been (17:101).

But that which inspired him first and last was his duty to God. His beneficence toward all human beings was only one aspect of the performance of the duty which he owed to his Maker. No consideration could stand in the way of the performance of that duty. When the Meccans gave his uncle, Abu Talib the choice between adhering to Muhammad or retaining the chieftainship of the tribe, Abu Talib put the matter before the Prophet. The Prophet told him that he could withdraw his protection, but that as for himself, he must continue till the end to do what God commanded him. He would not desist even if the Meccans placed the sun on his right and the moon on his left. That stand he maintained till the last.

At Uhud, when the Meccan commander, Abu Sufyan, believed that the Prophet and his principal companions had been killed, he shouted: "Glory to Hubul," naming the principal idol worshiped by the Meccans. The Prophet, out of prudence and considerations of security, had told his companions who had gathered round him after he had been wounded and had been revived, not to answer Abu Sufyan's calls when one by one he had challenged Muhammad, Abu Bakr, and Umar, to answer him. Following his instructions they kept quiet and maintained

silence even when Abu Sufyan proclaimed the glory of Hubul. But when the Prophet heard this last exclamation, he turned impatiently to his companions, prudence and all concern for security thrown to the winds, and exclaimed: "Why don't you say, 'Allah is the Most High, the Most Exalted'?" The shouts went up and convinced Abu Sufyan and the Meccans that the Prophet was alive. The Meccans thereupon held a council whether they should attack the small party round the Prophet and put an end to all of them. But they thought better of it, and calling it a day, withdrew from the field.

On the day of Hunain when the Prophet had at the very start of the battle been left alone with only a dozen supporters, even Abu Bakr could not restrain him from spurring forward his mule toward the enemy, proclaiming that he was a true Prophet and no impostor.

With him God always came first. So much was this so that even his enemies in Mecca were wont to say, "Muhammad is intoxicated with love of God."

Such is the testimony of man and events. What of the testimony of God, Who had commanded him to shoulder the responsibility of conveying His message to mankind and of leading them back to Him? The Prophet's enemies did not believe in his mission nor that what he proclaimed as revelation was received by him from God, but even for them God's testimony concerning him became conclusive in the sense that it was openly and widely proclaimed. They found it so true that on no occasion and in no particular did they ever call it in question. It was a standing challenge to his opponents. They never took it up.

The Prophet was commanded to proclaim: "If Allah had so willed I should not have recited the Quran to you, nor would He have made it known to you. I have indeed lived among you a whole

lifetime before this. Will you not then understand?" (10:17). Thus God put forward the purity and righteousness of the Prophet's life, which those who opposed him so bitterly had observed at close quarters, as proof that he was not capable of uttering a lie against God. Not without reason had his fellow townsmen bestowed upon him the title "*El-Ameen*," the Trusty, the Faithful.

Faced squarely with this challenge, not one of them ever attempted to assert that Muhammad had on any occasion been guilty of saying or doing that which was not utterly true, completely righteous.

Yet all the time he had to stress that he was but a man like the rest, lest, observing the security that he enjoyed in the midst of constant danger, the success that he extracted even from persecution and defeat, and the ultimate triumph of his cause to which the whole of Arabia was witness, some might be tempted to ascribe to him supernatural capacities and powers or superhuman status. "Say: 'I am but a man like yourselves. I have received revelation that your God is only One God. So let him who hopes to meet his Lord act righteously, and let him join no one in the worship of his Lord'" (18:111).

When challenged by his opponents to show them a sign, like causing a spring to gush forth from the earth, or causing the heavens to fall upon them in pieces, or ascending to heaven and bringing down with him a book which they could read, he was commanded to reply: "Holy is my Lord. I am but a man sent as a Messenger" (17:91-94).

It was necessary to stress this both in view of what had happened in the case of some previous prophets who were exalted as divinities by their followers and also for the simple reason that only a man can be an exemplar for men. An angel or a god cannot set an example which man can follow. The dimensions

would be utterly disparate. It is a curious inversion that a prophet's opponents often seek to justify their rejection of him on the ground that he is but a man, a single individual from among themselves (54:25). Yet, as the Quran points out, it is only a man who can serve as God's Messenger to men. An angel would be sent as a prophet if the earth were peopled with angels (17:95-96).

The Prophet's disclaimer of any supernatural powers or capacities is repeatedly emphasized in the Quran. For instance, he is commanded to say that he does not possess knowledge of the unseen, save only that much which God reveals to him (2:256; 72:27-28). Had he possessed such knowledge, he would have collected abundant good for himself, and no evil could have touched him (7:189). It is true that the Prophet had full faith in God's promises of help and the ultimate triumph of the cause, but he set a clear example that faith in God and in His promises entailed the putting forth of the utmost effort toward the achievement of the purpose and the goal which God himself had appointed.

For instance, the Prophet had been assured of God's protection against his enemies (5:68), of his victorious return to Mecca (28:86), of the ultimate success and triumph of his cause (58:22-23), but he did not for one moment slacken his vigilance or his effort in respect of the complete discharge of his own duty and of exhorting his followers to do the same (3:140, 201).

He was not only kindly and affectionate toward those who came in contact with him, praying for them and exhorting them constantly to order their lives in accordance with Divine commandments and guidance, but also exerted himself to the utmost to train them in every aspect and sphere of life, so as to prepare and equip them for the discharge of the responsibilities that lay upon them and for much heavier ones that were due to

be placed upon their shoulders (3:150). He was commanded to exhort his followers to pray for even those who persecuted them and paid no heed to the warnings of God, and to overlook and forgive their trespasses (45:15).

He was “a mercy for mankind.” God called him so and he did indeed prove himself such in every respect (21:108) It was grievously painful for him that his people should be distressed, and he was ardently desirous of promoting their welfare -tender and compassionate at all times and anxious to apply balm to their oft-harassed and wounded spirits (9:128).

When persecution became unbearable in Mecca, the Prophet directed those of his followers who could do so to migrate across the Red Sea to seek shelter and peace in the dominions of the Emperor of Ethiopia. Later, when life was made almost impossible for him and for the Muslims in Mecca, the migration to Medina was decided upon but the Prophet himself stayed on in Mecca till all those who could be the objects of the Meccans' resentment and who were free to do so had departed from Mecca. Of the free, male adults only Abu Bakr, Ali, and himself were left. Abu Bakr accompanied him, and Ali, who had been entrusted with the return of money and articles which some Meccans had left with the Prophet for safe keeping, soon followed him.

On one occasion when there was an alarm in Medina at night, the people began to collect in the mosque, as they had been directed by the Prophet, awaiting his instructions. Presently they saw him riding into the town from the plain. He had already been out to investigate, and assured them that there was no danger, that they could go back to sleep. He was the most alert of them at all times concerning their security, as a good shepherd should be concerning his flock.

Passing along one afternoon he noticed a freed man sweating over his task. The Prophet approached him quietly from behind and covered his eyes with his hands as children sometimes do in sport. The man put up his hands to his eyes and from the softness of the hands covering them concluded that this intimate and affectionate gesture could come only from the Prophet. The Prophet began to laugh and removed his hands from the eyes of the man. This was his way of bringing comfort to one who might have considered himself lonely and friendless and might have been weary of his task.

On shaking hands with a laborer and perceiving that his hands were rough and calloused from hard toil, the Prophet held the man's hands within both of his and massaged them gently, repeating several times: "These hands are very dear to God."

That is why God affirmed that the Prophet possessed the highest moral excellences (68:5) and that God's Grace had been bestowed upon him in abundance (17:88).The highest yearning of the human soul is to win the love of God through its own devotion to, and love of, Him. The Quran succinctly points the way for the satisfaction of that yearning. The Prophet was commanded to say: "If you love God, follow me: then will God love you and forgive you your faults. Surely, God is Most Forgiving, Merciful" (3:32).

When Ayesha said that the character of the Prophet was the Quran, she meant that the Prophet illustrated in his own person to the highest degree the excellences that the Quran teaches. It was because he had become a living example and illustration of the *highest excellences* that man is capable of achieving, that God's testimony affirmed: "Verily, you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar, for him who fears Allah and the Last Day, and who remembers Allah much" (33:22).

Muhammad's soul being in travail over the moral and spiritual degradation of his people did strive to approach the Majesty of God, seeking and praying for a remedy. His striving found favor with God, Who, on Muhammad's approach, drew near to him, and the spiritual communion between the two wrought a unity of purpose. Muhammad's will and purpose were completely subordinated to those of God, and were, so to speak, fused with them. This spiritual fusion is metaphorically expressed in the Quran as "one chord serving two bows and even closer still." God then revealed to Muhammad that which was needed for the guidance of mankind (53:9-11).

The Prophet has explained this experience very simply. He has said that if a servant of God submits himself wholly to the will of God, and commits the whole direction of his life to it, he gradually achieves a condition in which God becomes the eyes with which he sees, the ears with which he hears, the hands with which he labors, and the feet with which he walks. This comes as close to expressing the mystic spiritual reality involved as it is possible to do within the limits of human speech.

The Quran expresses the same idea in several contexts. In the battle of Badr, what appeared to be an utter impossibility was converted into an achievement and the three hundred-odd ragged, half-starved, ill-armed Muslims gained complete victory over the thousand or so well-armed, seasoned Qureish warriors, proud of their might and arrogant in their pride. During the height of the battle, the Prophet took up a handful of pebbles and sand, throwing it in the direction of the Meccan army. A fierce gust of wind happened to rise suddenly, blowing from the Muslim side in the direction of the Meccans, and carried with it a whole storm of pebbles and sand, which so confused and bewildered the Meccans that they could not see aright, and were seriously handicapped. It contributed materially to their defeat.

This incident is referred to in the Quran as: “You slew them not, but it was Allah Who slew them. Thou threwest not when thou didst throw, but it was Allah Who threw, that He might overthrow the disbelievers and that He might confer on the believers a great favor from Himself. Surely, Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing” (8:18).

Again, the Quran affirms that those who swear allegiance to the Prophet swear allegiance to God. “God’s hand is upon their hands” (48:11). This verse has particular reference to an incident during the negotiations which resulted in the Treaty of Hudaibiyya, but it is of general application also. The expression “God’s hand” is, of course, metaphorical. God has no physical attributes of any kind, but the meaning is obvious: those who swear allegiance to the Prophet enter into a covenant to subordinate their wills and purposes completely to the will and purpose of God. Thus, though they make a covenant by placing their hands upon the Prophet’s hand, their true purpose is to *make* a covenant with God; and in that sense God’s hand is upon their hands.

In short, the whole of the Prophet’s life—every thought, every motion, every action, his very being—was devoted to God in the effort to seek closer communion with Him. This is clearly affirmed by Divine testimony: “Say: ‘My prayer and my sacrifice and my life and my death are all for Allah, the Lord of the Worlds. He has no associate. So am I commanded, and I am the first of those who submit wholly to Him’” (6:163-164).

Such was the Prophet in the *eyes of man* and in the estimation of God.

God has proclaimed: “Allah sends down His blessings on the Prophet, and His angels constantly invoke His blessings on him;

do you, O believers, also invoke Allah's blessings on him and offer him the salutation of *peace*" (33:57).

In obedience to this command, all through the centuries Muslims have constantly prayed for, and invoked Allah's blessings upon, the Prophet. It is estimated that *there are over one billion* Muslims in different parts of the world-and the number is daily increasing-of whom at least half carry out this Divine command several times daily. An average Muslim invokes God's blessings on the Prophet forty times during the course of each day, and many of them do it a great many more times. In fact, *every time* the Prophet is referred to in conversation, by name or by *reference to his Prophetic office*, Allah's blessings are invoked upon him and Allah's peace is called down upon him. Thus, having regard to the distribution of Muslim peoples round the world, every moment of the night and day millions of hearts supplicate the Almighty for His blessings on His Prophet. One who devoted his life so utterly to the service of God and His creatures as did the Prophet is *deserving of* the deepest gratitude on the part of the whole of mankind. By constantly invoking the blessings of God upon him, those who do so *seek to repay* a fraction of the debt that humanity owes him.

Chronological Table

Christian Era Before Hijra

Birth of Muhammad.	570	53
Muhammad's mother dies.	576	47
Abdul Mutalib dies.	578	44
Goes on training expedition with his uncle.	582	40
Journeys to Syria for Khadija.	593	29
Marriage with Khadija.	595	27
First revelation on Mount Hira. Khadija, Zaid and Ali accept Islam.	610	12
Conversion of Umer.	613	9
Persecution by Qureish at its height.	616	6
Boycott of the Muslims.	617	5
Abu Talib & Khadija die.	621	1

Christian Era After Hijra

The battle of Badr.	624	2
The battle of Uhud.	625	3
The battle of Ahzab	627	5

The Truce of Hudaibiya.	628	6
Invitation to rulers to accept Islam.	629	7
Fall of Mecca.	630	8
Death of the Prophet.	632	10